Vol.5

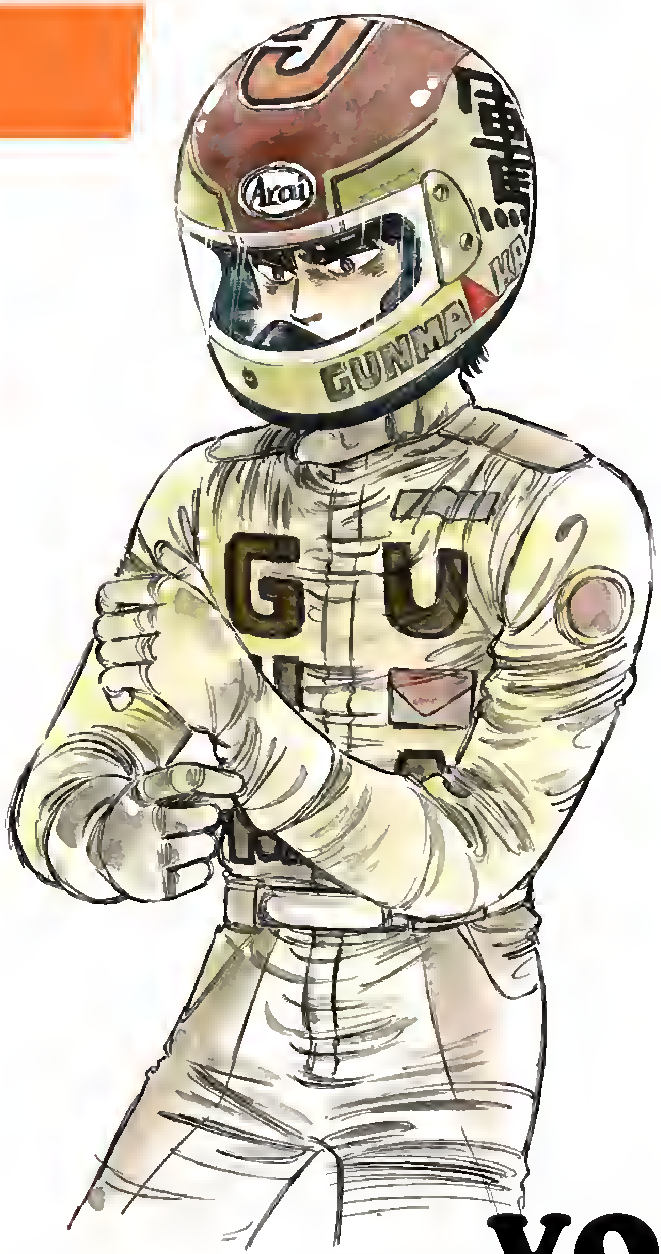
ROKUDA NOBORU

F

VOL. 5

F

ROKUDA NOBORU



VOL.5

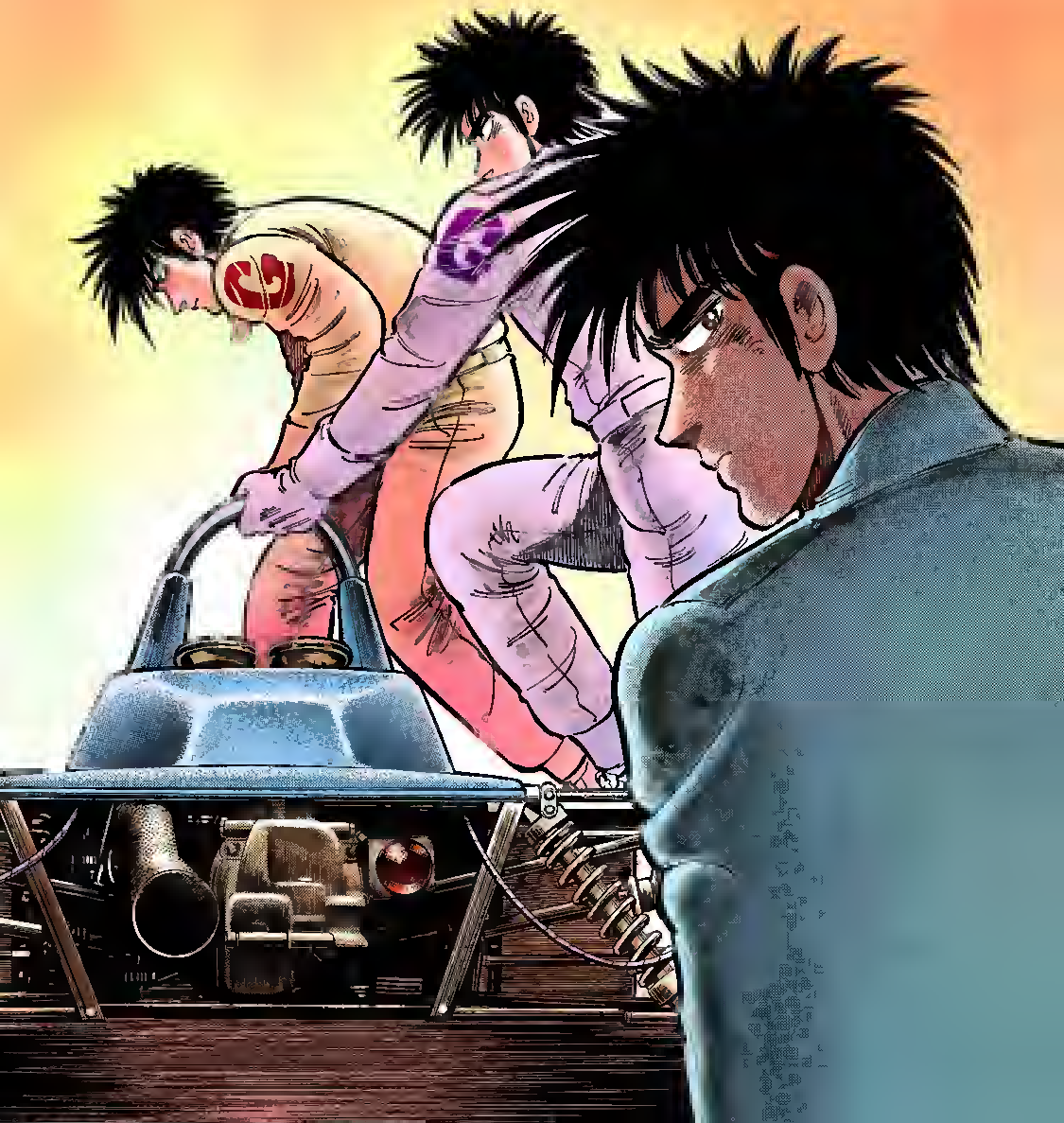
STEADY ADVANCEMENT

F

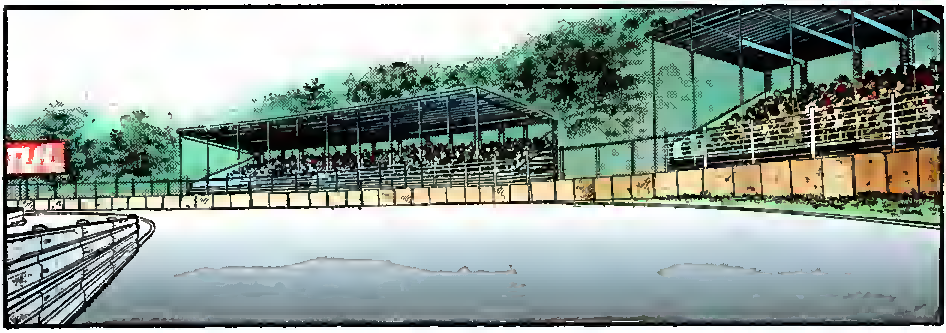
Vol.5
STEADY ADVANCEMENT

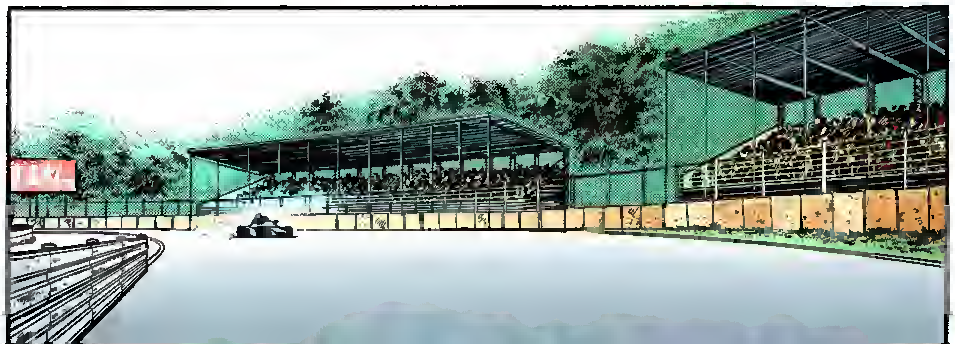
Chapter 1: Steady Advancement
Chapter 2: A Bitter Farewell
Chapter 3: False Courage
Chapter 4: Anxiety
Chapter 5: The Tamotsu Effect
Chapter 6: Race in the Rain
Chapter 7: Trust
Chapter 8: Yuki's Decision
Chapter 9: Off to Suzuka
Chapter 10: Hijiri's Secret
Chapter 11: Special Conditions
Chapter 12: The Breaking Point

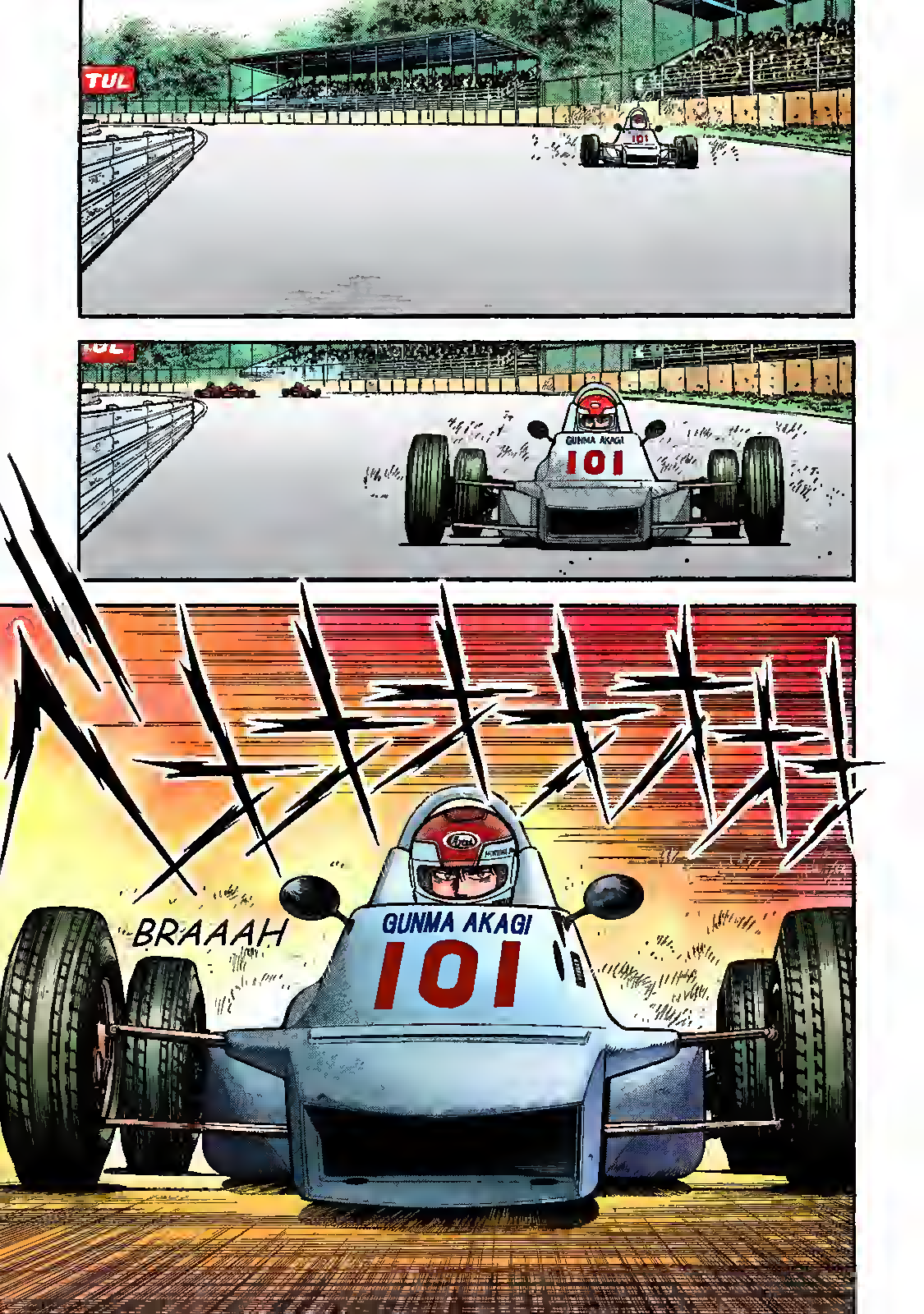
Chapter 1:
Steady Advancement

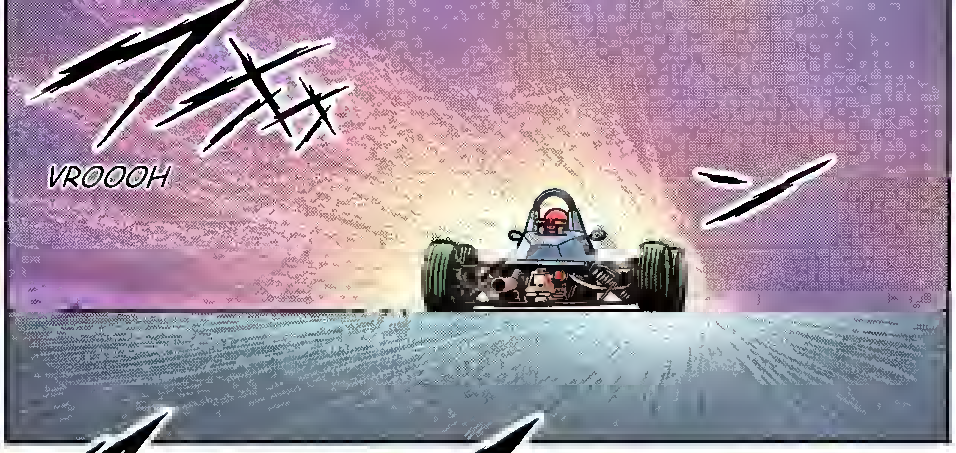


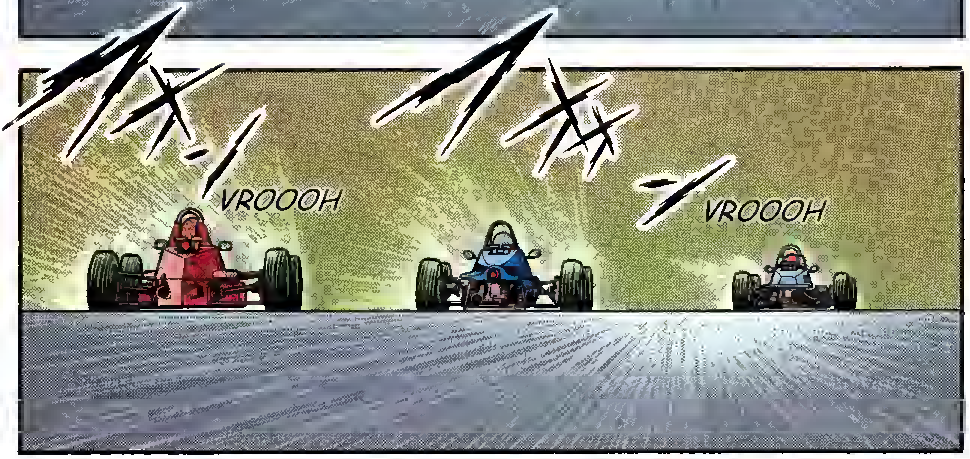
TSUKUBA
CIRCUIT
HONDA
POWERED by HONDA

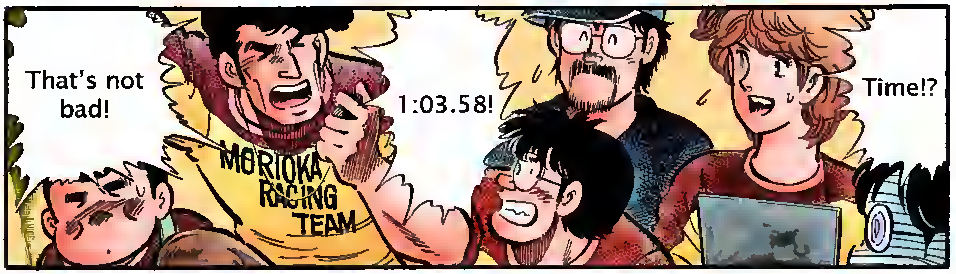


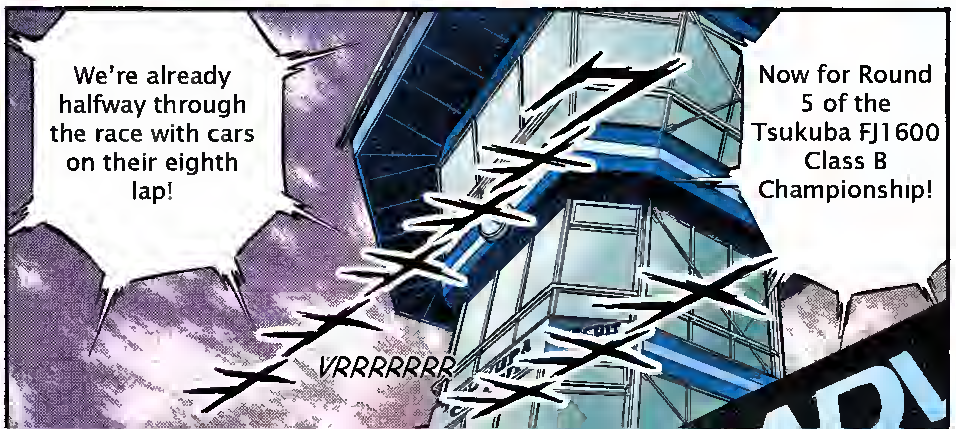


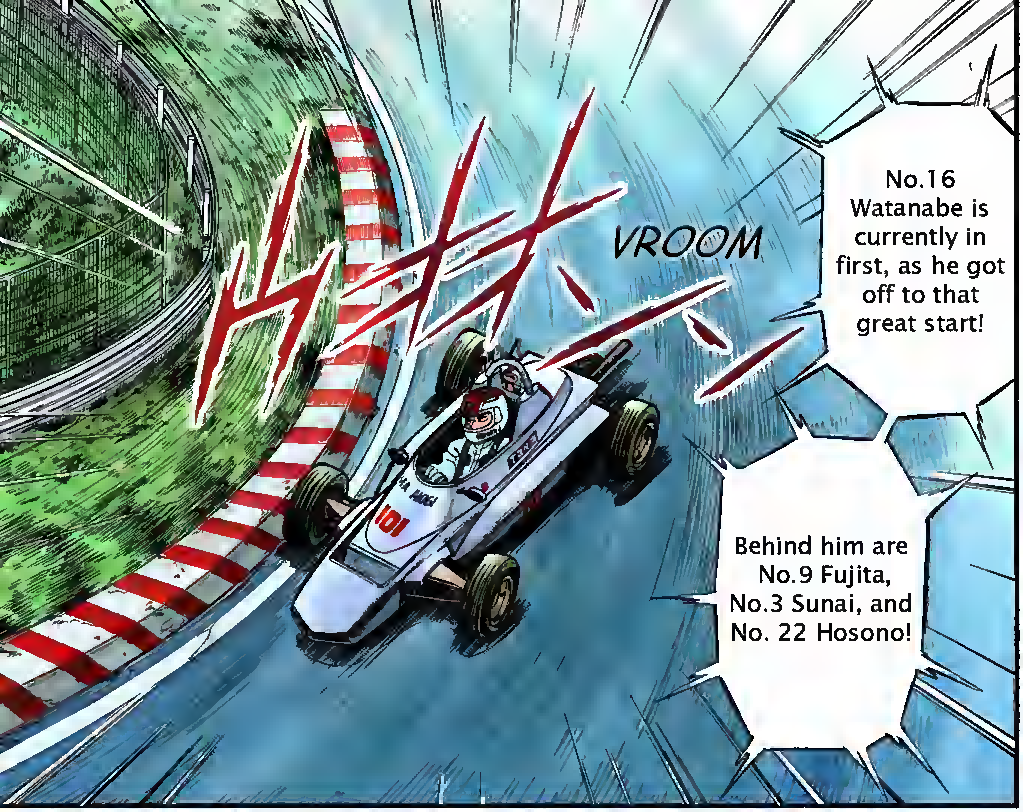

TUL
GUNMA AKAGI
101
BRAAAH
GUNMA AKAGI
101

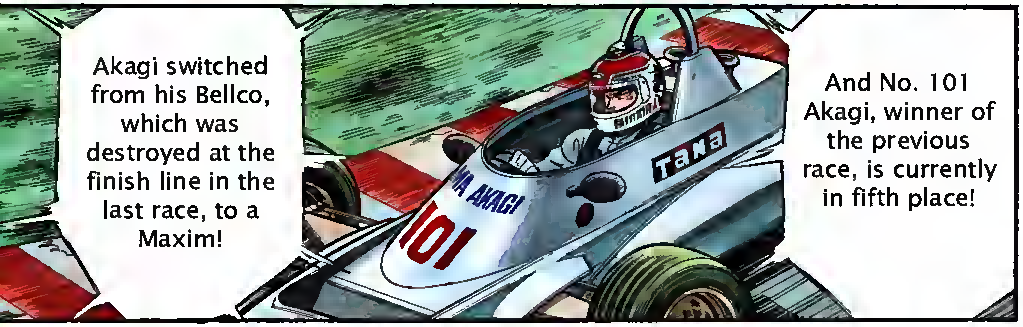

VROOOH

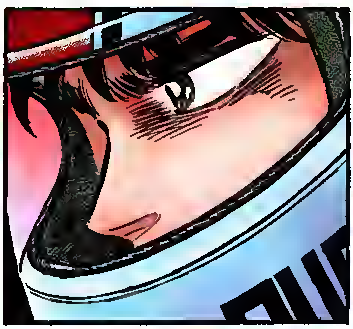

VROOOH
VROOOH

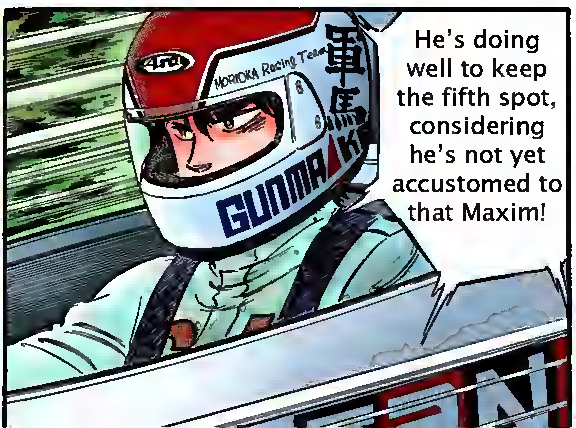

That's not bad!
1:03.58!
Time!?
MORIOKA RACING TEAM


We're already halfway through the race with cars on their eighth lap!
Now for Round 5 of the Tsukuba FJ1600 Class B Championship!
VRRRRRRR

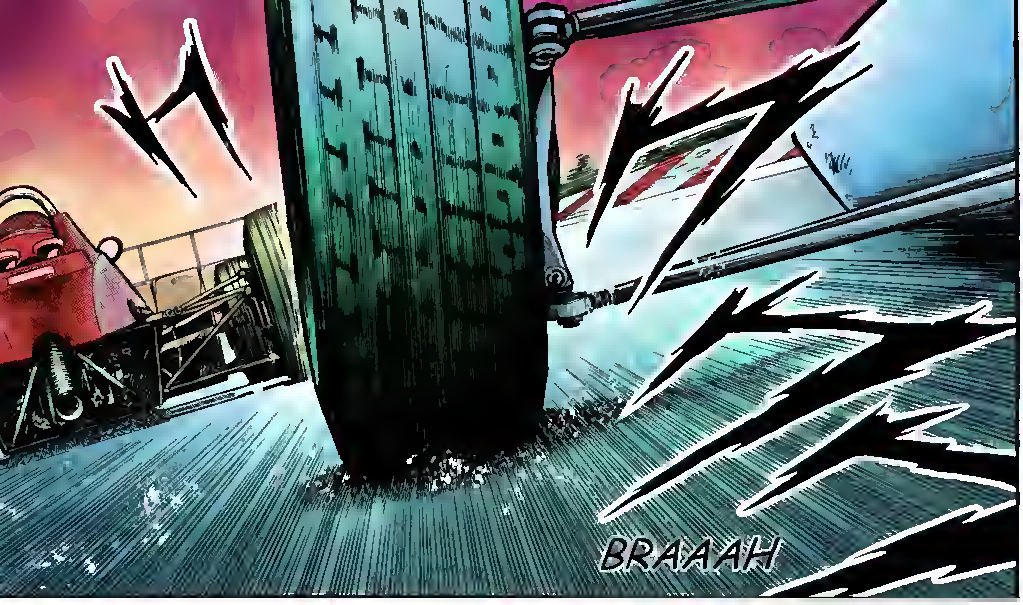

VROOM
No.16 Watanabe is currently in first, as he got off to that great start!
Behind him are No.9 Fujita, No.3 Sunai, and No. 22 Hosono!

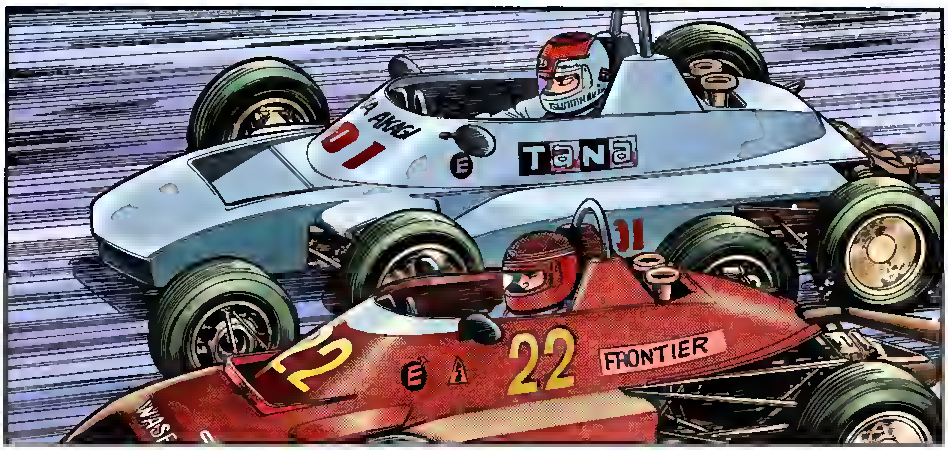

Akagi switched from his Bellco, which was destroyed at the finish line in the last race, to a Maxim!
And No. 101 Akagi, winner of the previous race, is currently in fifth place!

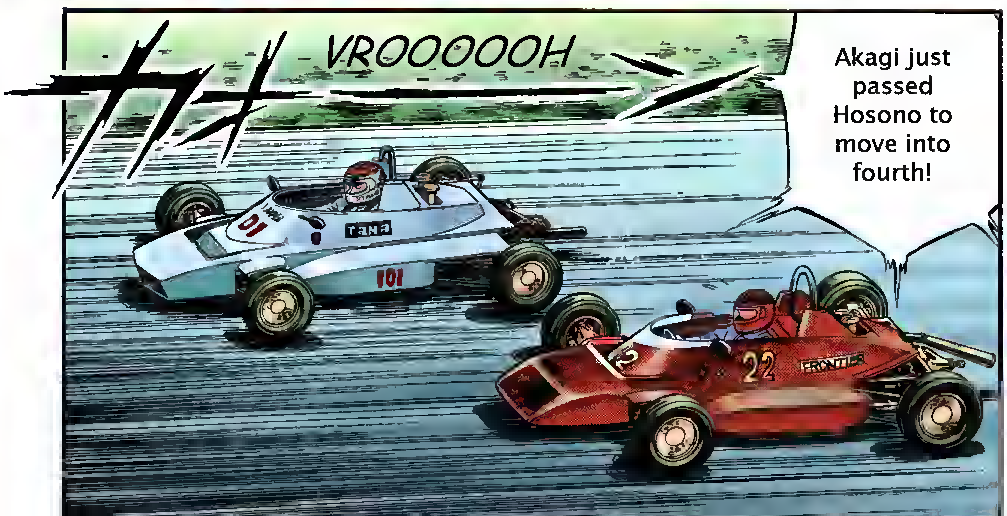



He's doing well to keep the fifth spot, considering he's not yet accustomed to that Maxim!

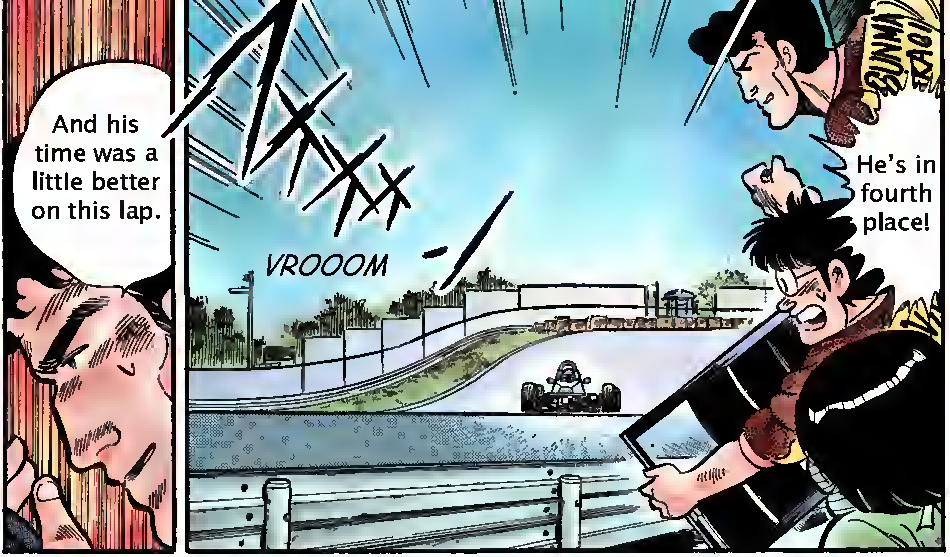
We've got Tamotsu's tuning to thank for that.
My Maxim can really move with Sir Gunma behind the wheel.
I'm shocked.
That's true! He's doing a great job, considering we didn't have time to thoroughly adjust the settings.
GUNMA AKAGI
I didn't have much time.
Actually, that ain't true. I hardly touched that Maxim.
Maybe he's not killing himself this time since Hijiri's not racing.
Gunma seems more relaxed than usual today.
I agree.
A zone?
That's not it. He's in a zone!

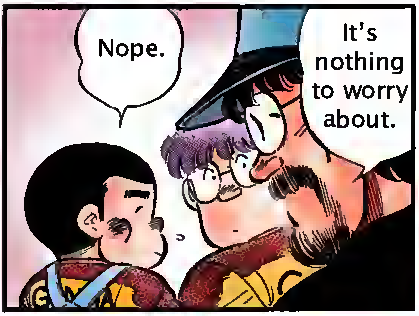

BRAAAH

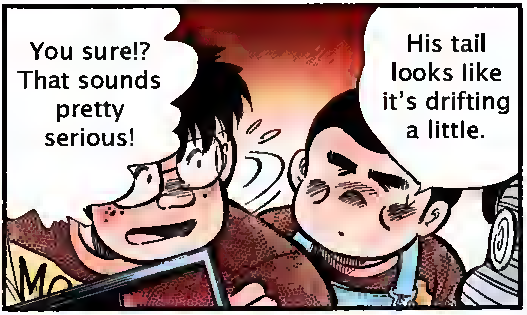

T∃N∃
01
22
FRONTIER

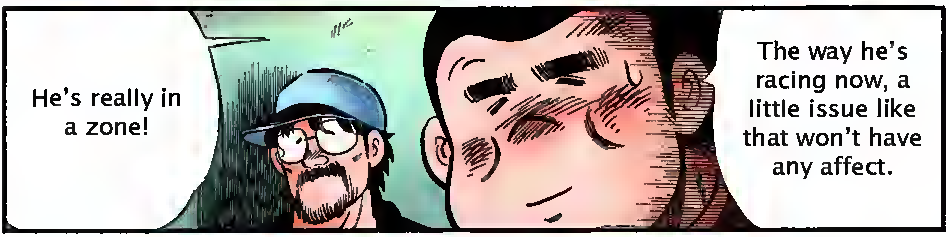

VROOOOOH
Akagi just passed Hosono to move into fourth!
01
101
22
FRONTIER

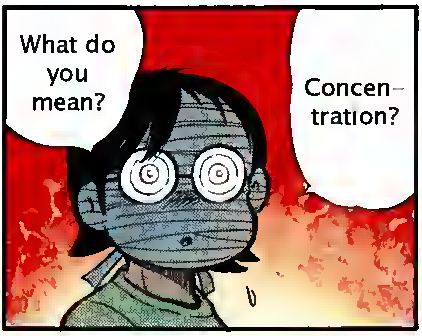
Weird.
VROOOOOH
ASPEC
ASPEC
GUNMA
AKAGI
01
What's up with me today?
But I feel some kind a peace deep inside.
I'm burning up inside to get ahead of everybody like usual.
I feel so out of character.
It's like I'm the only one on the track.
What a trip.
AKAGI
01


And his time was a little better on this lap.
VROOOM
He's in fourth place!

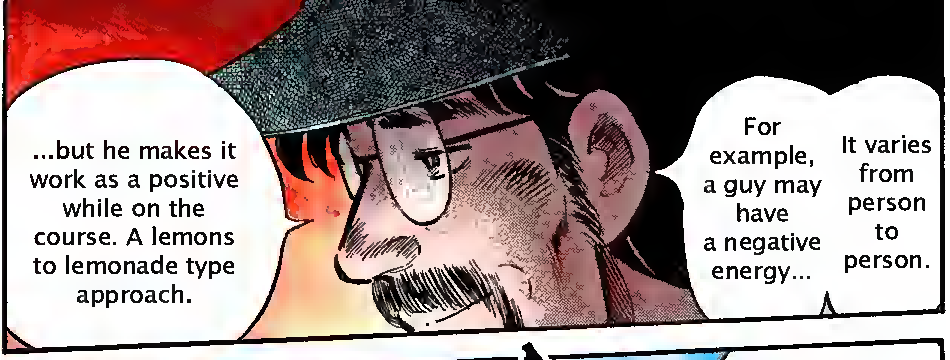

Nope.
It's nothing to worry about.

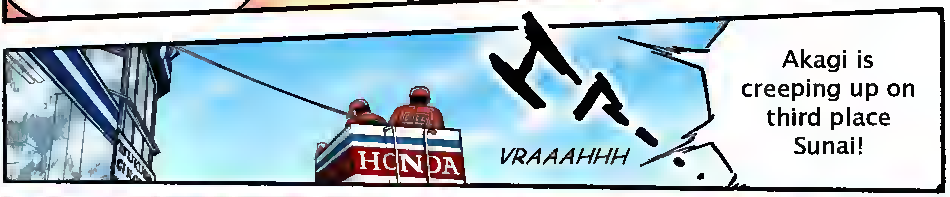

You sure!? That sounds pretty serious!
His tail looks like it's drifting a little.

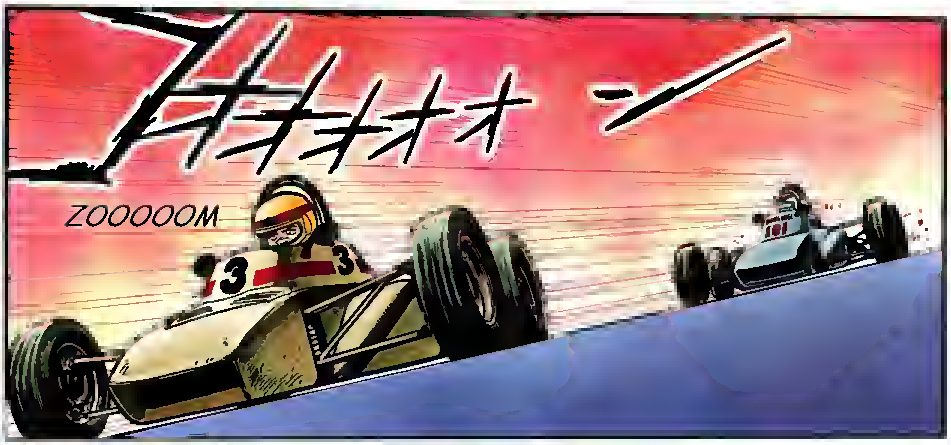

He's really in a zone!
The way he's racing now, a little issue like that won't have any affect.

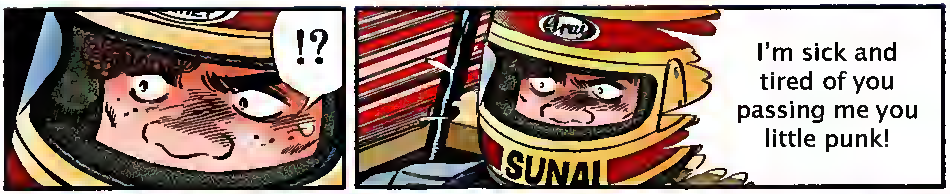

What do you mean?
Concen-tration?

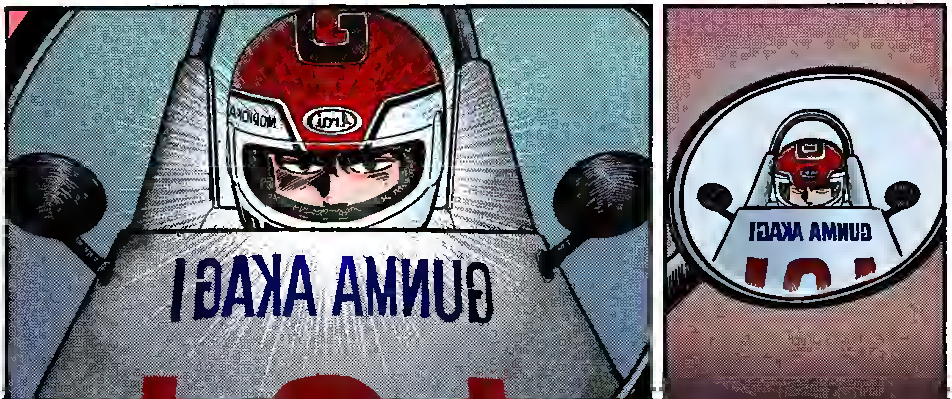
...but he has a lot more concentra-tion now.
I don't know what happened to him back in the country...

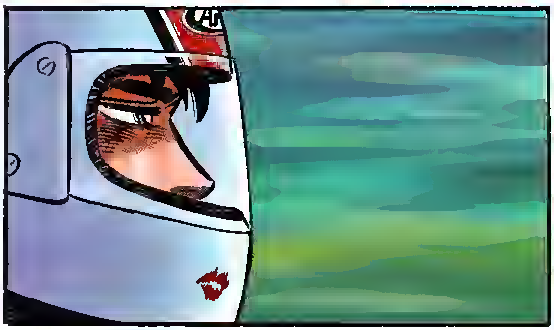

...but he makes it work as a positive while on the course. A lemons to lemonade type approach.
For example, a guy may have a negative energy...
It varies from person to person.

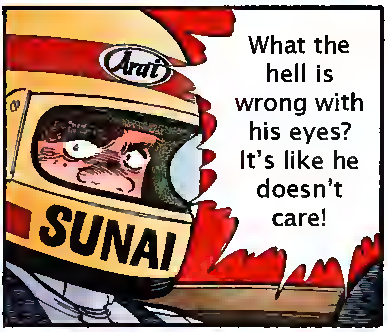

HONDA
VRAAAHHH
Akagi is creeping up on third place Sunai!


ZOOOOOM
3
3
101

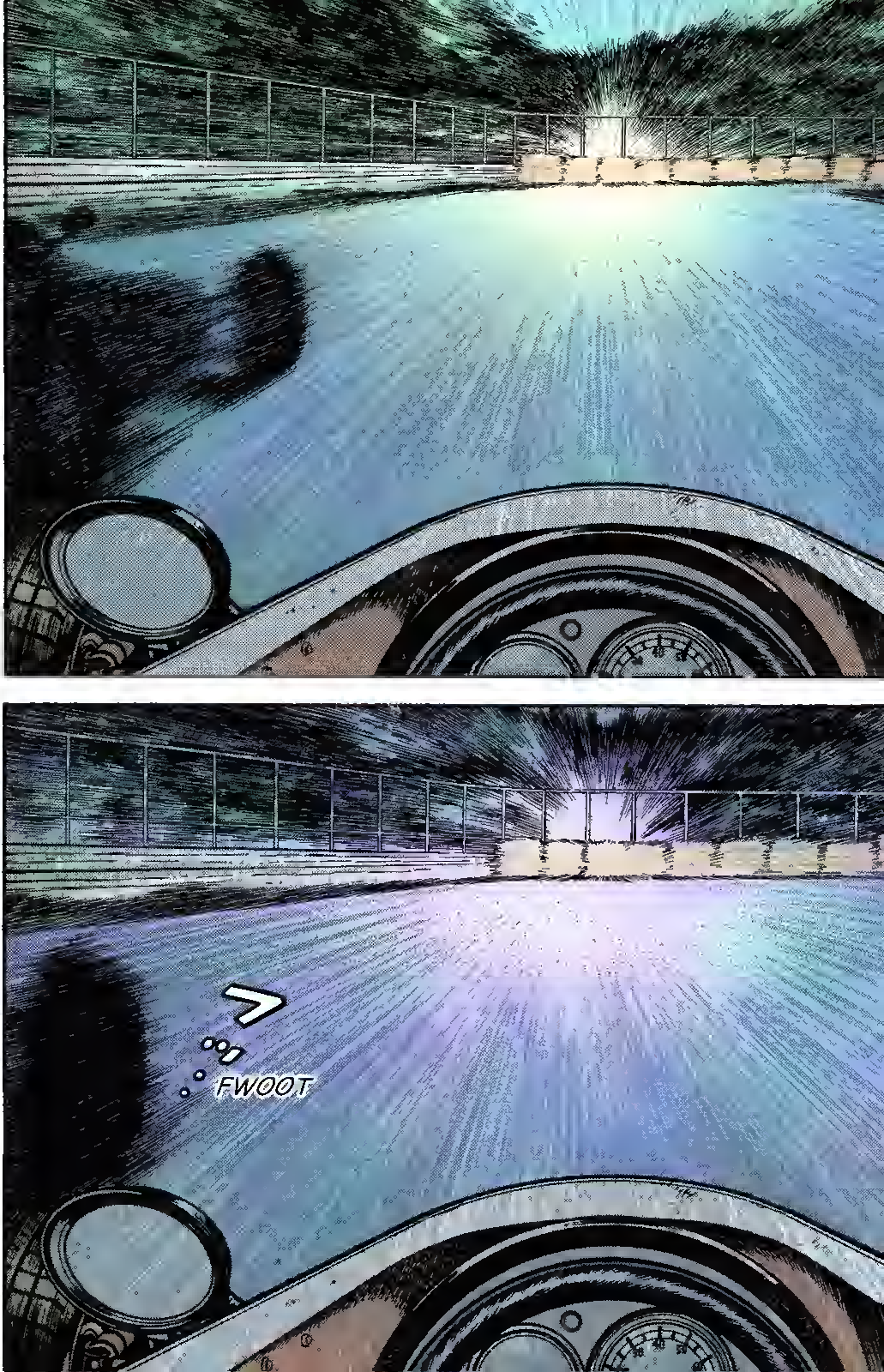

!?
SUNAI
I'm sick and tired of you passing me you little punk!

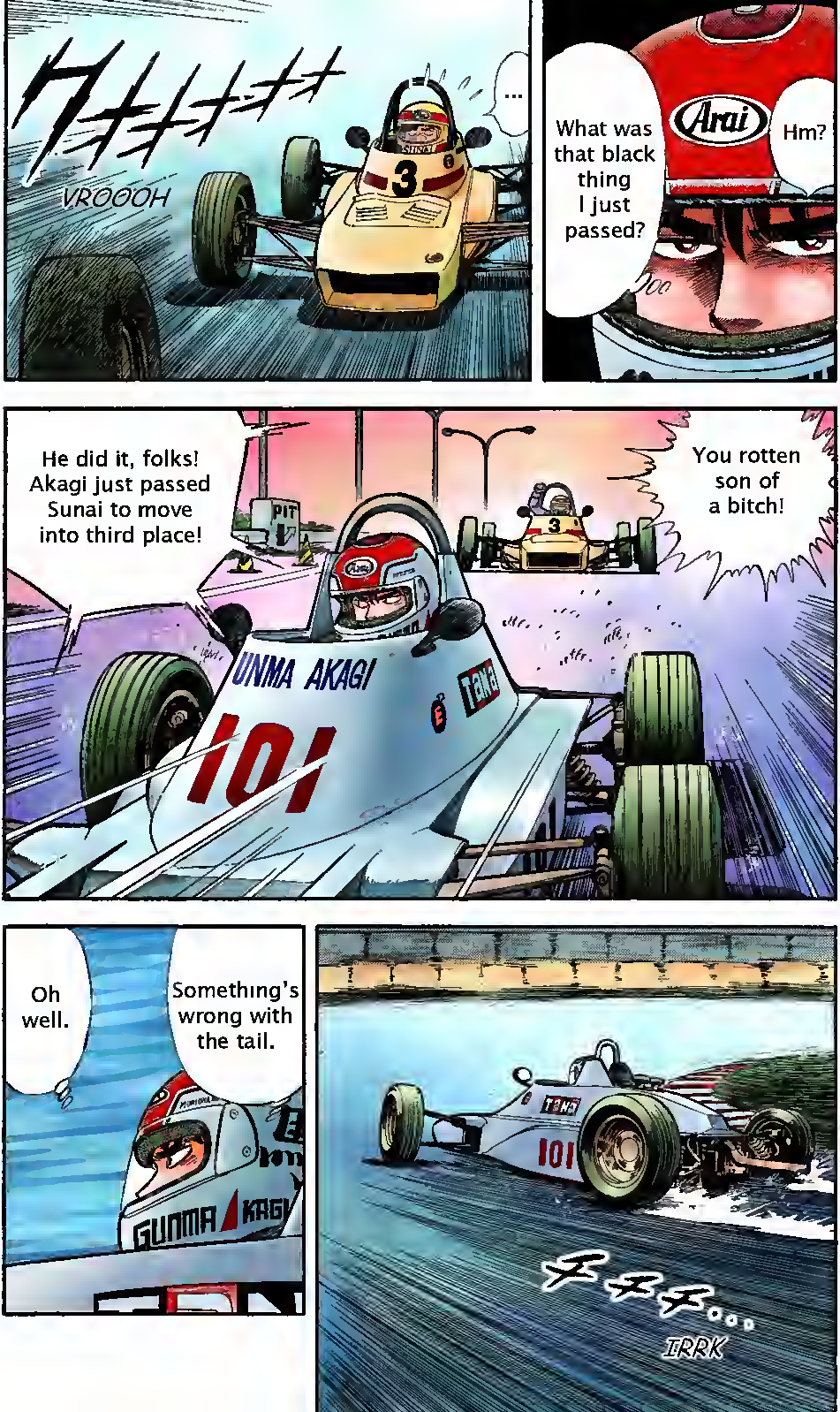

GUNMA AKAGI
GUNMA AKAGI

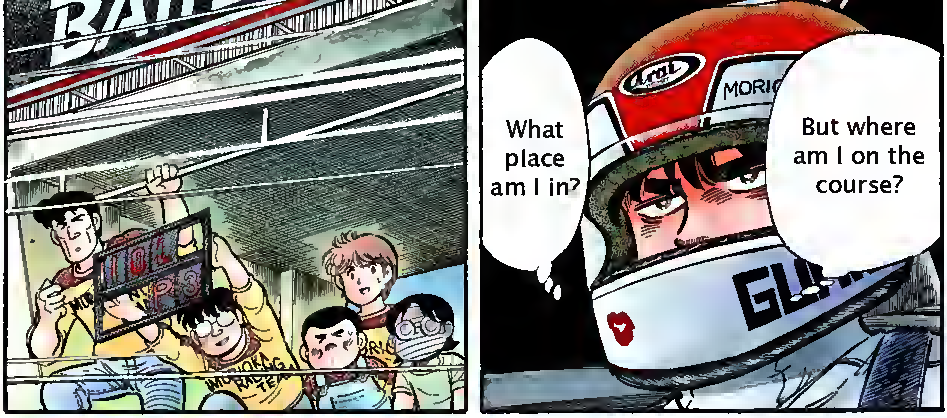


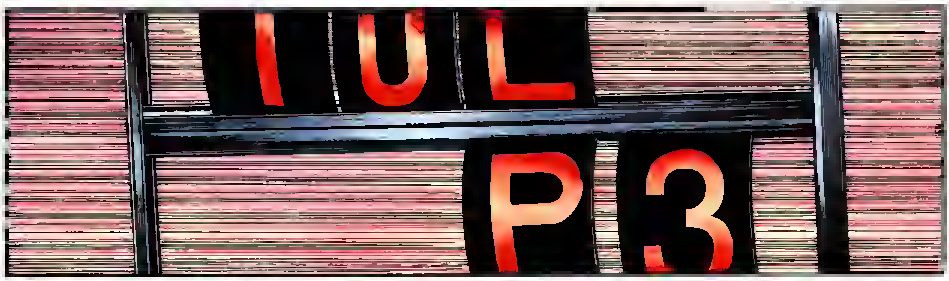

Arai
SUNAI
What the hell is wrong with his eyes? It's like he doesn't care!

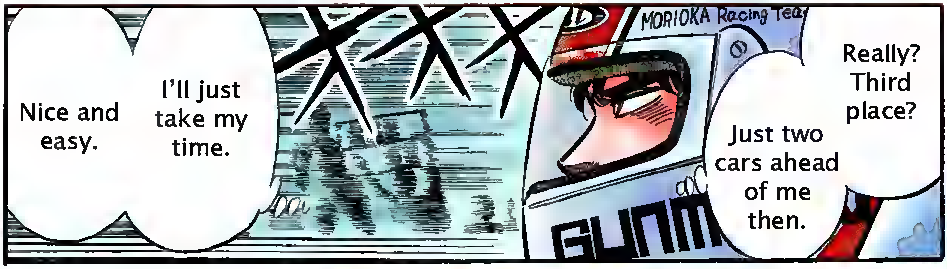
オオオ
SHOOOOOH!

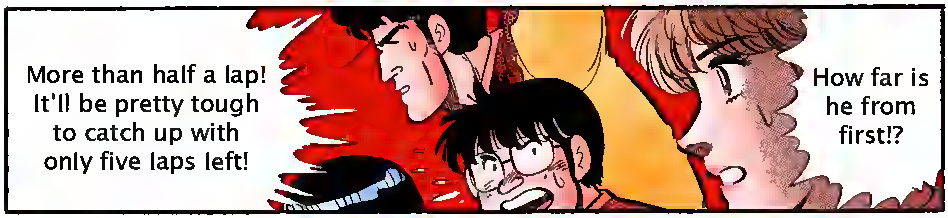

FWOOT

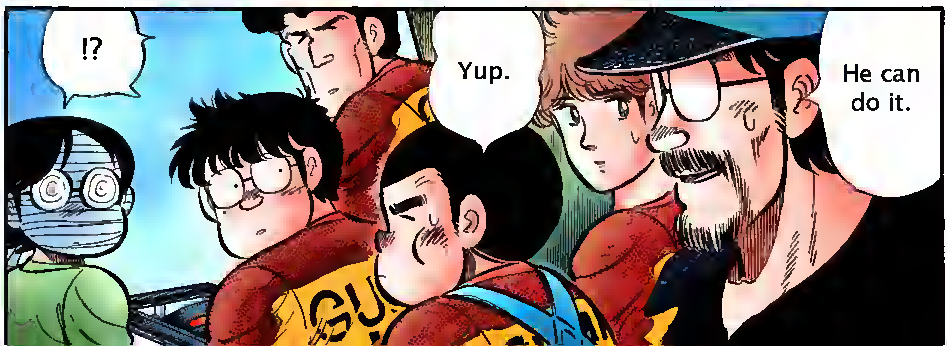

VROOOH
...
SUNAI
3
What was that black thing I just passed?
Arai
Hm?
He did it, folks! Akagi just passed Sunai to move into third place!
PIT
3
UNMA AKAGI
101
Takata
You rotten son of a bitch!
Oh well.
Something's wrong with the tail.
GUNMA
KAGI
101
IRRK

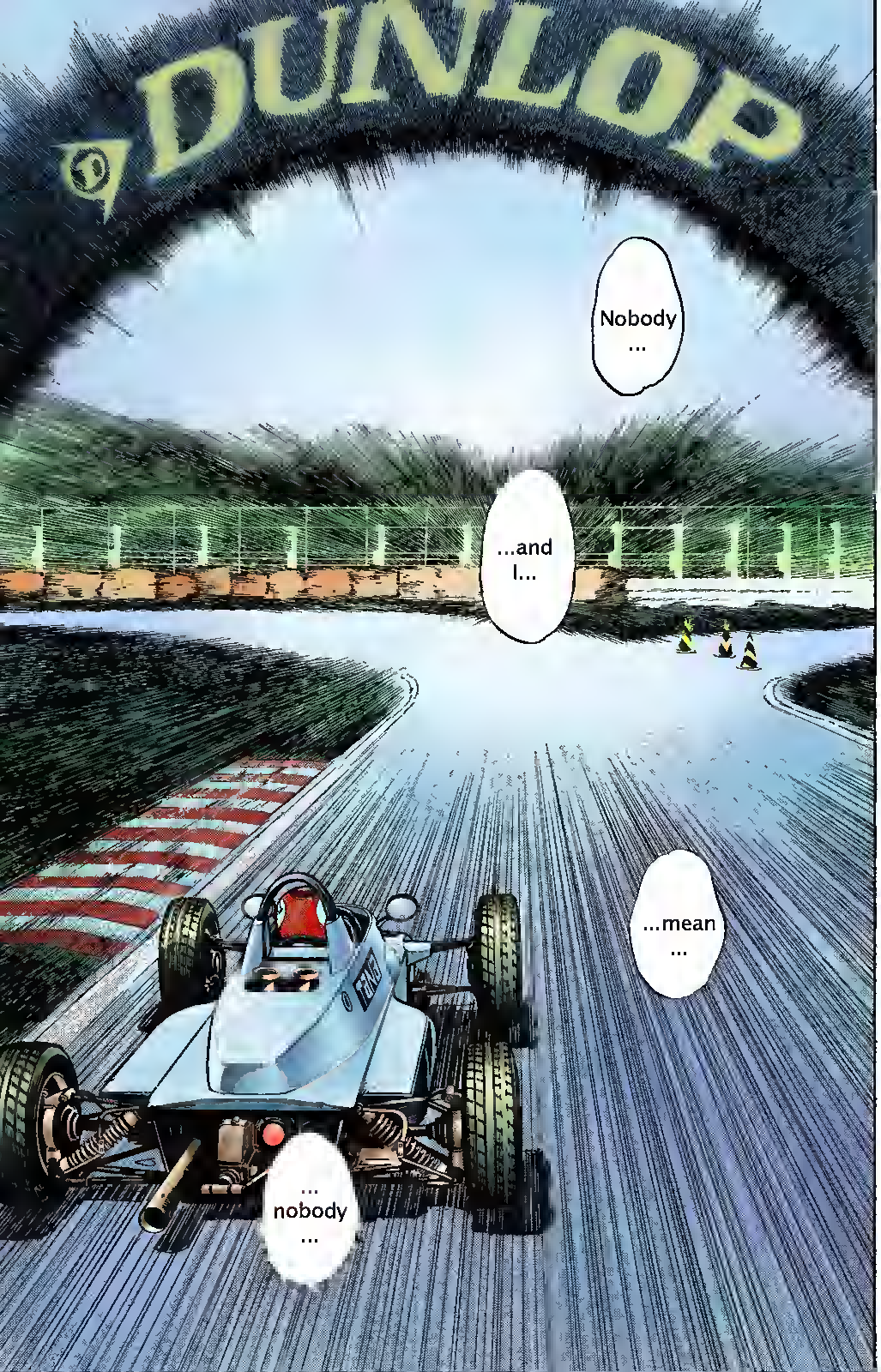

What place am I in?
But where am I on the course?

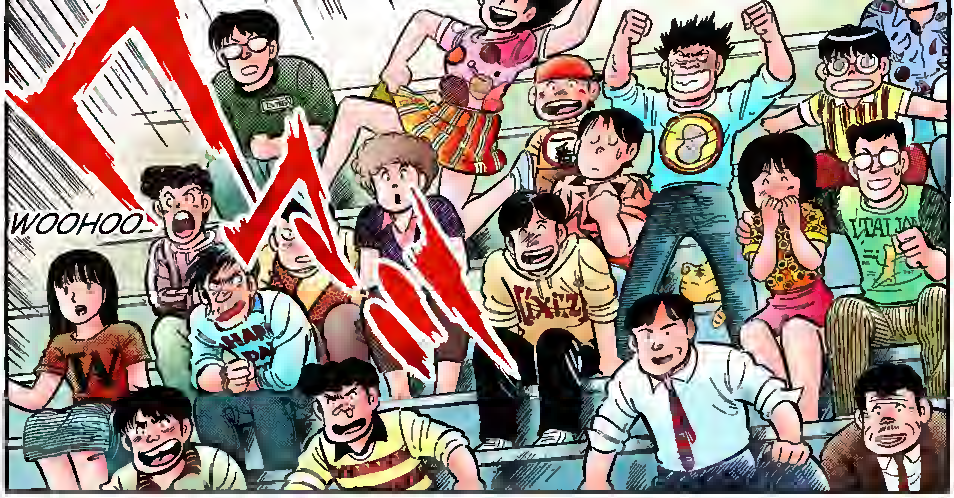

P3

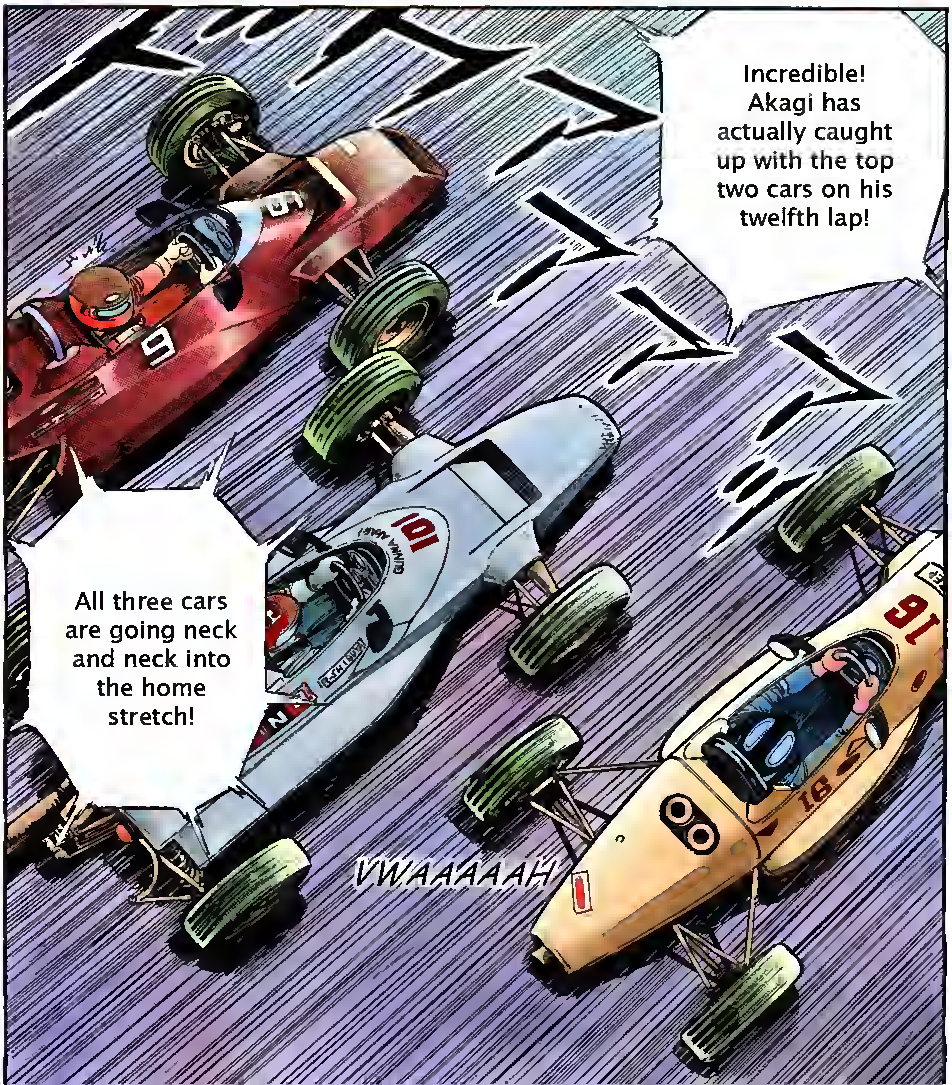

Nice and easy.
I'll just take my time.
Really? Third place?
Just two cars ahead of me then.


More than half a lap! It'll be pretty tough to catch up with only five laps left!
How far is he from first!?


!?
Yup.
He can do it.

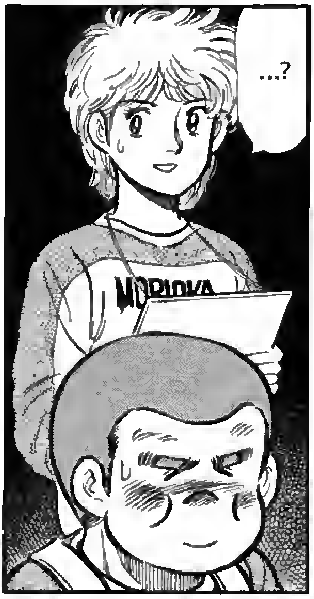

DUNLOP
Nobody ...
...and I...
...mean ...
... nobody ...


WOOHOO-


Incredible! Akagi has actually caught up with the top two cars on his twelfth lap!
All three cars are going neck and neck into the home stretch!
VWAAAAAH
9
101
91
16

VROOOOH
WATA
Akagi is making his move!

Woo hoo!
MORIOKA RACING TEAM
G– Gunma!

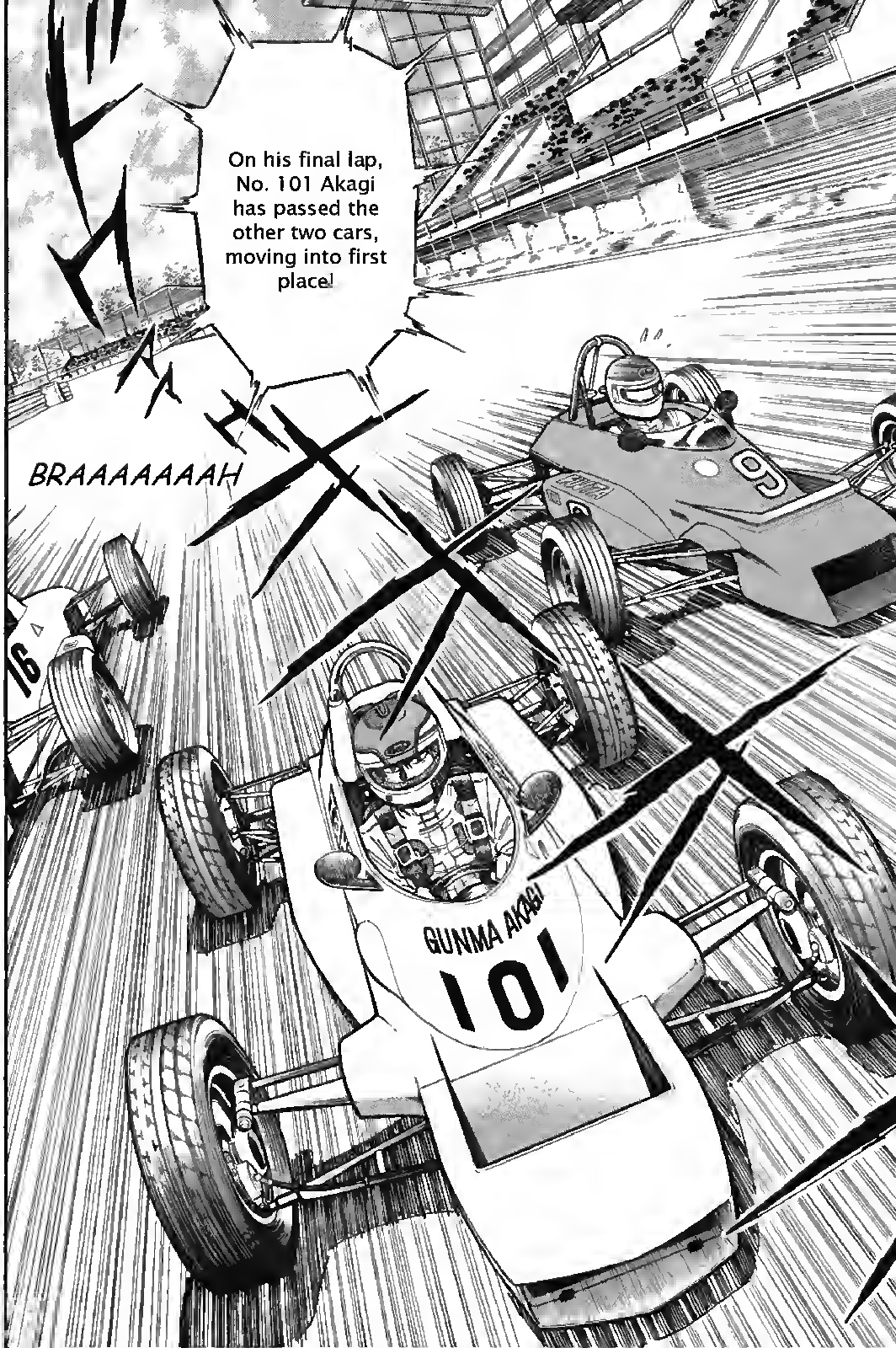

...?
MORIOKA

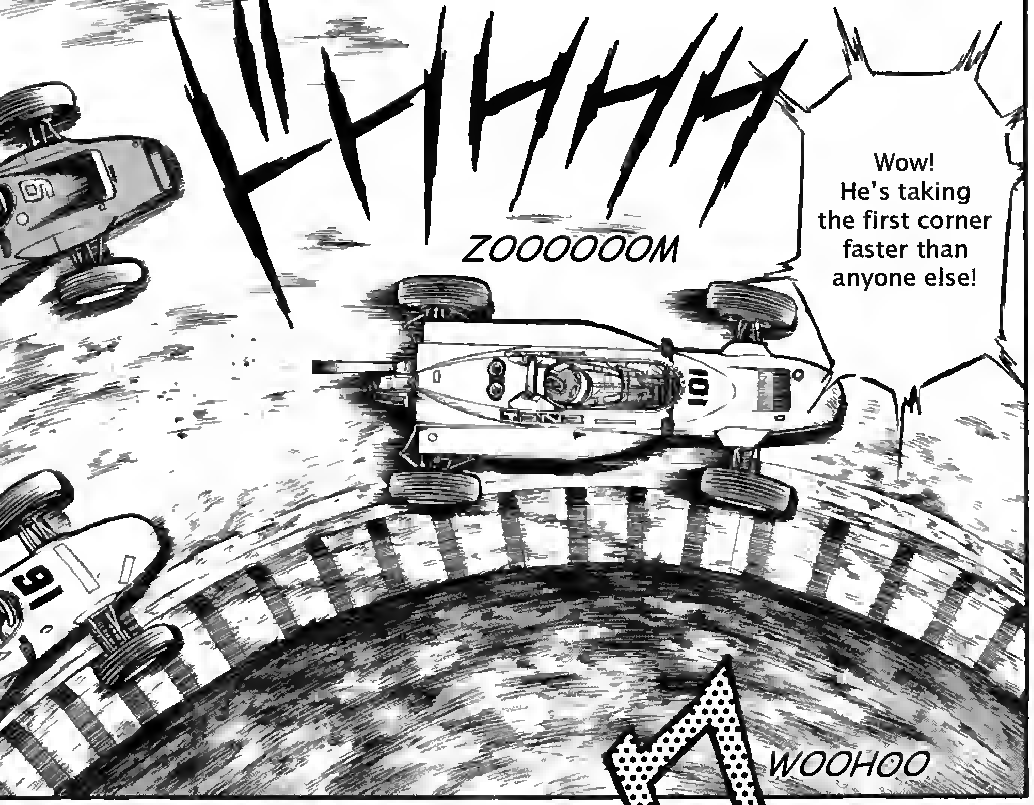
You'll be fine for a while without me.
Amazing, Gunma. Just amazing.

F

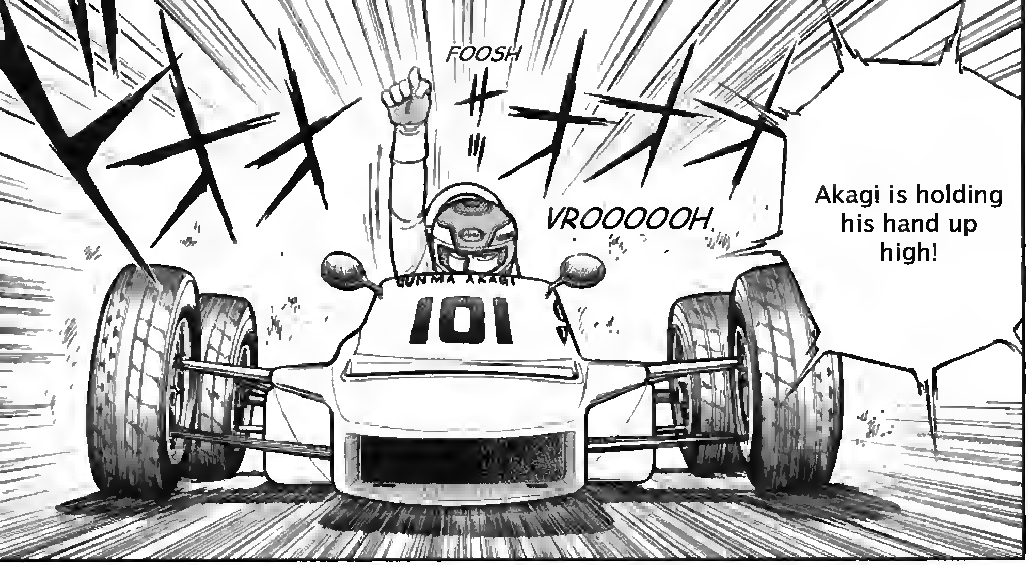
VOL. 5

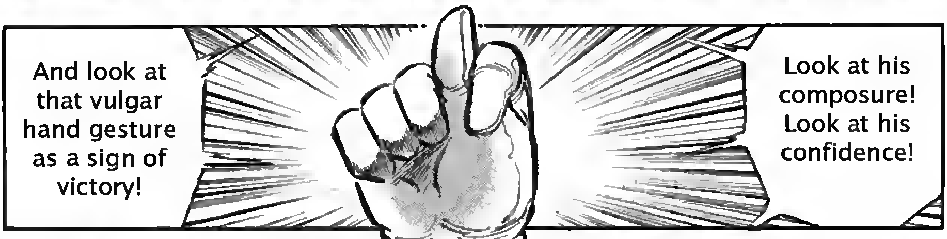
Chapter 2:
A bitter Farewell

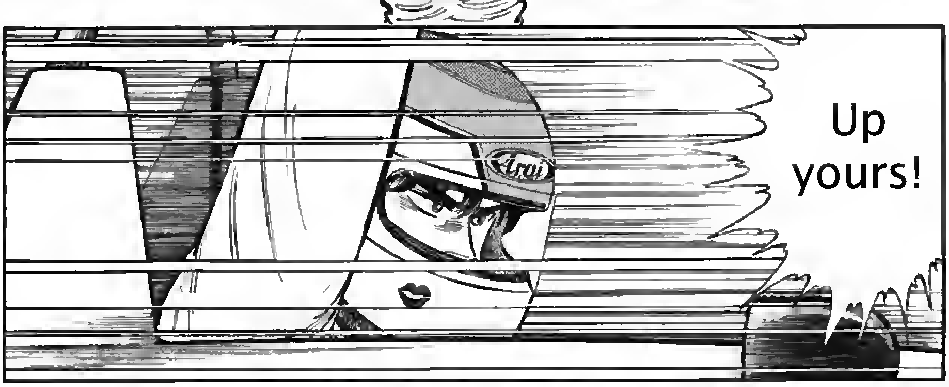

On his final lap, No. 101 Akagi has passed the other two cars, moving into first place!
BRAAAAAAAH
GUNMA AKAGI
101


ZOOOOOOM
Wow! He's taking the first corner faster than anyone else!
WOOHOO
Akagi is really in a zone today, folks! What incredible racing!
...
What did you just say?
Tamo-tsu?

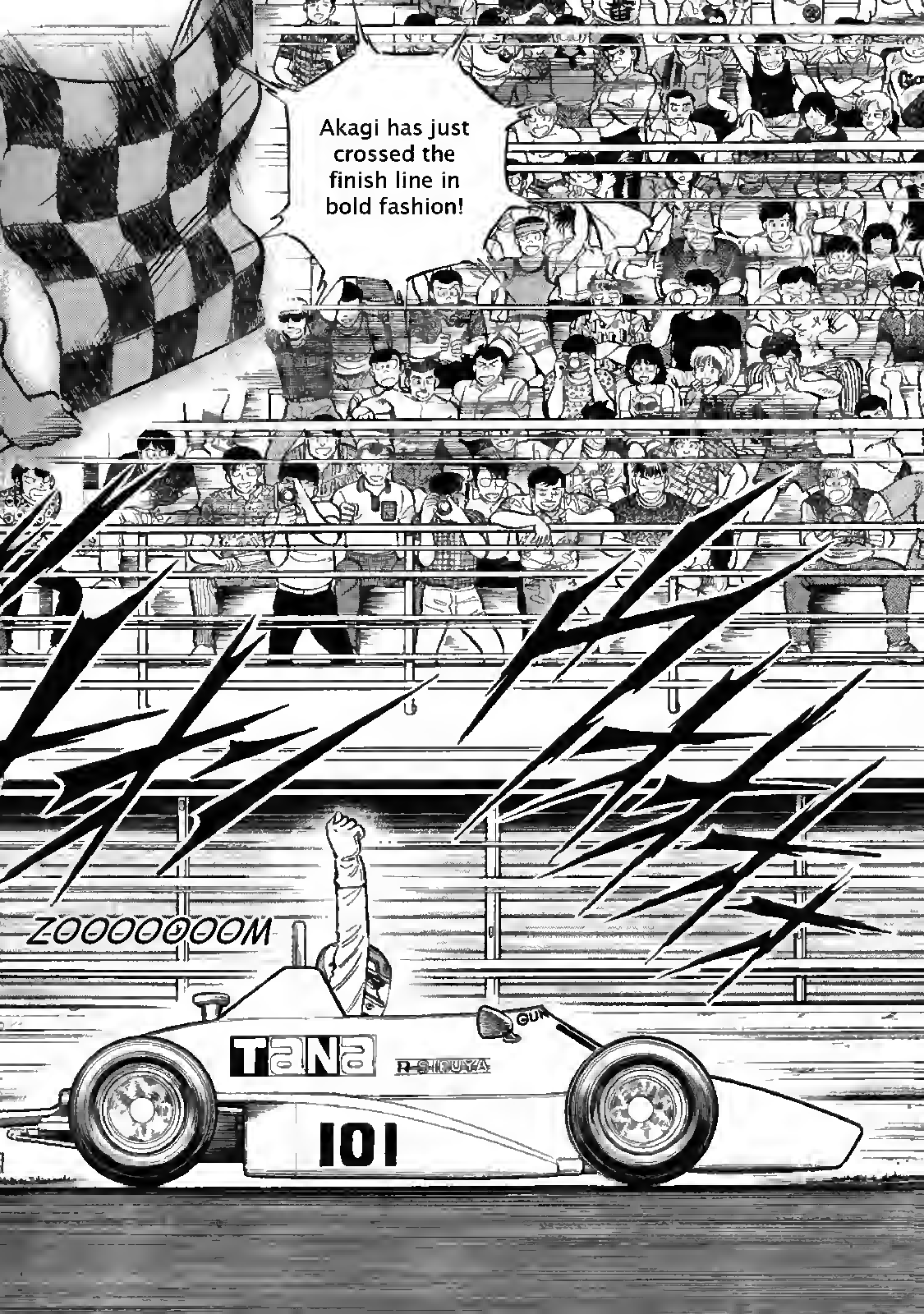
What did you...
Something about being without you?
...
I'm about to wet myself!
Dang!
Just a half a lap to go! Keep it up!
HA HA HA
Woohoo! This is nuts, Tamotsu! He's really stretching his lead now!
SMACK
...
VROOOH
They're making their last corner now!
STARE

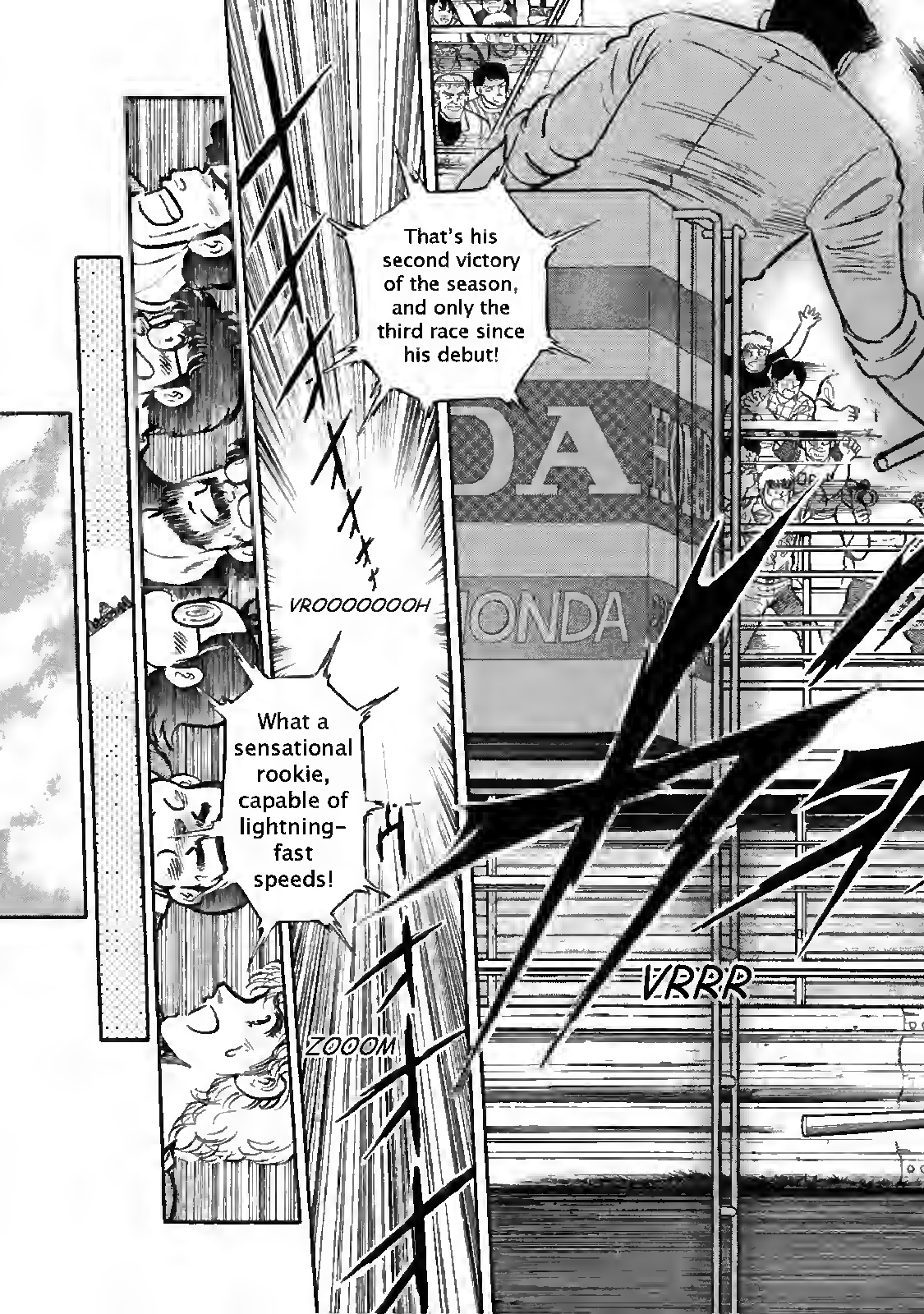

FOOSH
VROOOOOH
GUNMA AKAGI
101
Akagi is holding his hand up high!

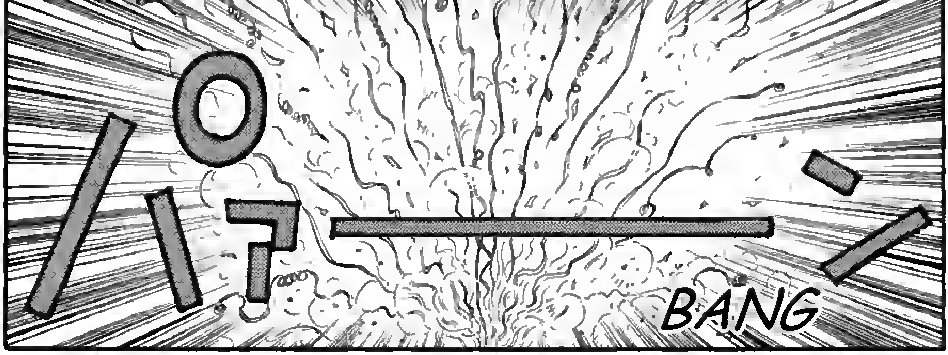

And look at that vulgar hand gesture as a sign of victory!
Look at his composure! Look at his confidence!


Up yours!

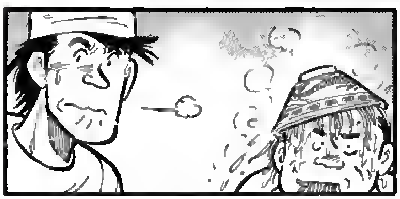
Akagi has just crossed the finish line in bold fashion!
That's his second victory of the season, and only the third race since his debut!
What a sensational rookie, capable of lightning-fast speeds!
VROOOOOOOH
ZOOOM
VRRR
ZOOOOOOOM
TaNa
101


Akagi has just crossed the finish line in bold fashion!
ZOOOOOOOM
TANA
101

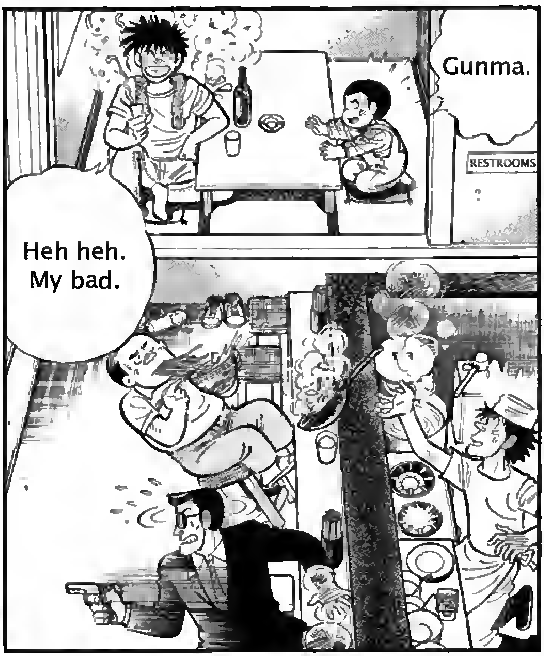

That's his second victory of the season, and only the third race since his debut!
VROOOOOOOH
What a sensational rookie, capable of lightning-fast speeds!
ZOOOM
VRRR
HONDA


BANG

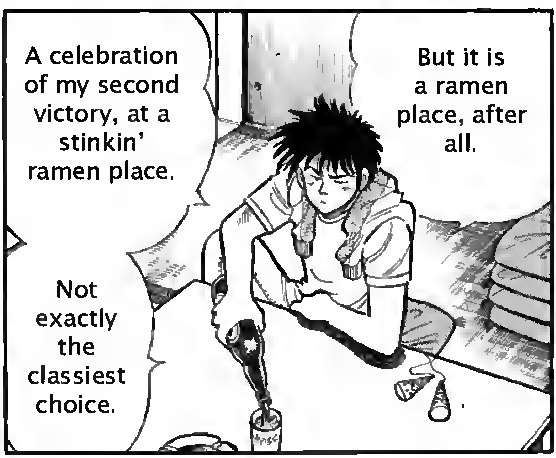
Watch it.
Hm?



Where is everybody? They oughta be here by now.


Gunma.
RESTROOMS
Heh heh. My bad.

Couldn't we have gone to a nice hotel restaurant, with maybe three or four hot chicks to wait on me?
THUNK

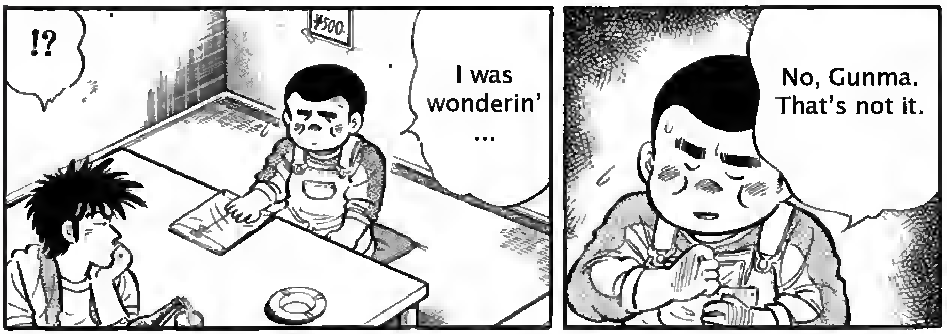

A celebration of my second victory, at a stinkin' ramen place.
But it is a ramen place, after all.
Not exactly the classiest choice.

YEAH YEAH YEAH
ぐぃ ぐぃ ぐぃ
Gunma, don't do it.
No no, you've got to perform for me tonight.
That's what I'm talkin' about.
はは はは は、 HA HA HA
Let me pleasure you, champ.
Just relax and unwind.
We're sorry.
Hehehe- heheh.
ドドドドド!!
BANG
Almost like them cars in front of me were in reverse!
I dunno, dude. Today's race went entirely too well.
...I was a god at that moment in time!
It's like...
Well...
...

It's only FJ... Heh.
Hmph. It wasn't that amaz-ing.
We were in awe watchin' you do your thing from the pit!
...you were definitely in the zone today.
¥500
...I asked them to come a little later.
Actually ...
Yeah?
DRIP
DRIP
ぐびーっ
CHUG
CHUG
I'm ready to eat here already!
Anyway, where the hell are Junko and them?
I got somethin' to talk about.
So it's just you and me.
...

I already know what you wanna say.
I know, Tamotsu.

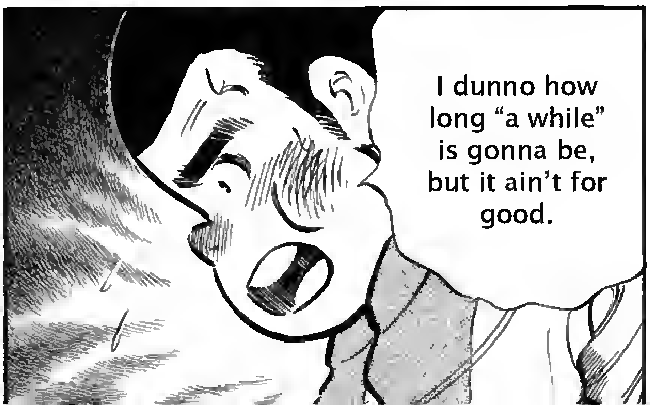
You and me can go to the bathhouse together after this, and the women are on me!
You got nothin' to worry about, buddy. I got plenty of prize money!
Really?

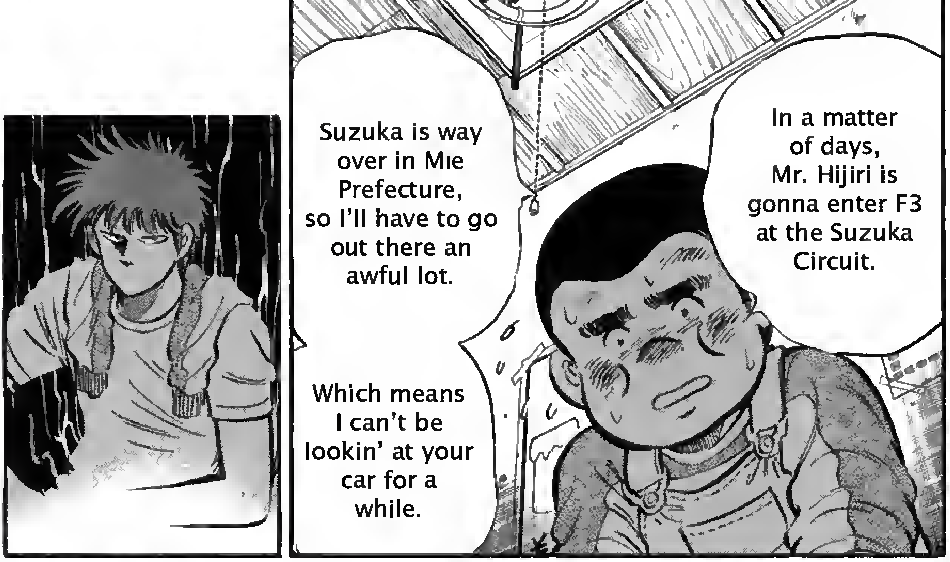

!?
¥300
I was wonderin' ...
No, Gunma. That's not it.

...if you'd hold on to this.
GUNMA
AKAGI

Anyway, I want you to hang onto it...
Go ahead and tear it up if you want.
How come you still got this thing? You ain't torn it up yet?
Isn't this that idiot Hijiri's mechanic contract?

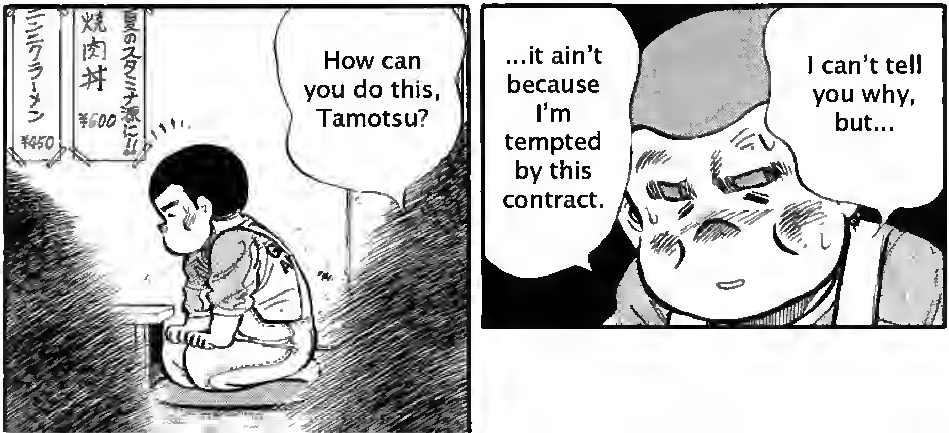
...Mr. Hijiri's mechanic for a while!
I'm gonna be...

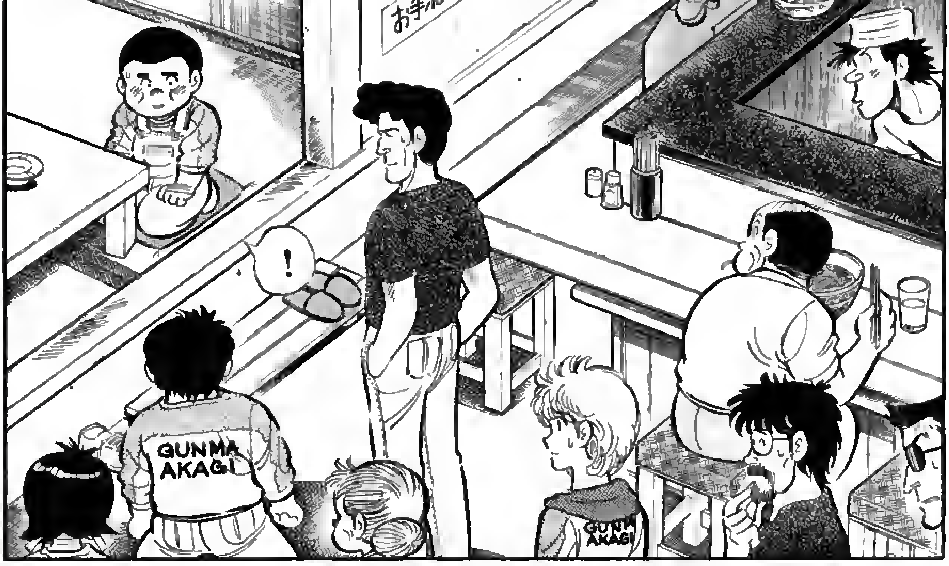

I dunno how long "a while" is gonna be, but it ain't for good.


In a matter of days, Mr. Hijiri is gonna enter F3 at the Suzuka Circuit.
Suzuka is way over in Mie Prefecture, so I'll have to go out there an awful lot.
Which means I can't be lookin' at your car for a while.

Yup.
F3, huh...

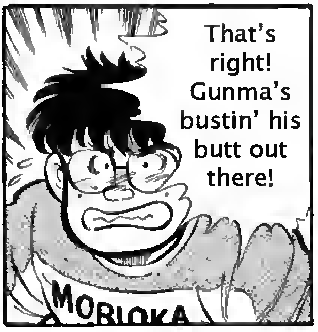
I hope you can under-stand.
Do what you want with it. I ain't gonna sign on to nothin' with Hijiri.
So why give this to me?


How can you do this, Tamotsu?
焼肉丼 ¥600
ニンニクラーメン ¥450
...it ain't because I'm tempted by this contract.
I can't tell you why, but...


!
GUNMA
AKAGI
GUNMA
AKAGI

Yeah
...but at least give us a reason!
There's nothing we can do about you working as Hijiri's mechanic...

...I realize that.
I...


That's right! Gunma's bustin' his butt out there!
MORIOKA

...but we scored a nice race car.
Maybe Gunma wasn't able to get that money he was after...
And he's got a nice little win streak going

It doesn't make sense!
You realize that, but you're leaving us? Without any reason!?
Calm down.
ORIOKA
RACE
TEA

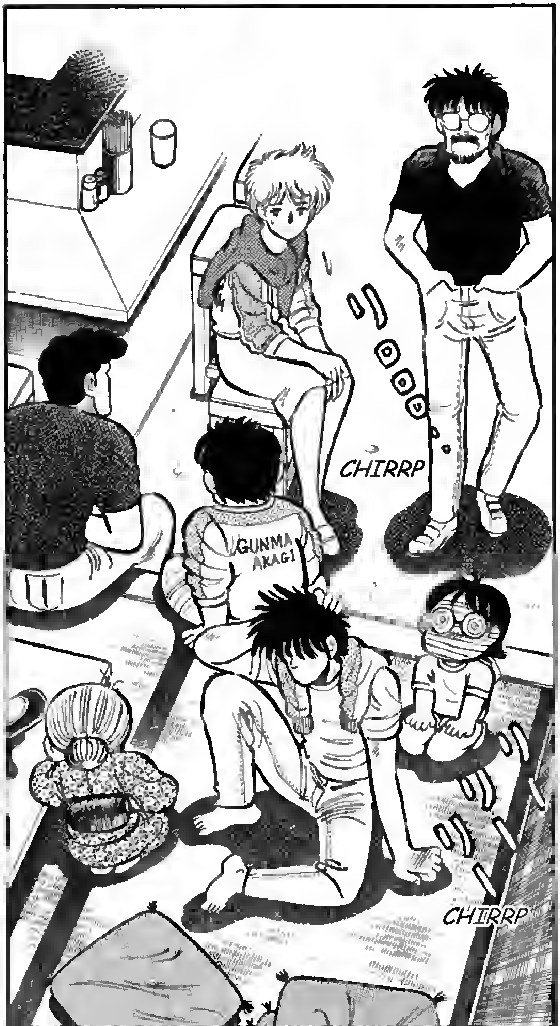
¥500-
I really am sorry.
I'm sorry.
...I just can't say nothin' right now.
But I...
...Mr. Hijiri may never be able to race again.
If I tell you the reason...
!
Get up.
Tamo-tsu.

Gunma
...
CLATTER
...
GUNMA
AKAGI
Yeah, cool your jets guys.
Hold on a second, you two.
Ta-motsu
...
SHOOF

CRACK
I don't wanna see your face no more!
Get the hell out!
SPLOOT
SPLOOT
CRASH

ラーメン
CHIRRP
CHIRRP

Dum-
bass
...
I don't need you to win! I'll win a whole mess of races without you!


CHIRRP
GUNMA
AKAGI
CHIRRP

Chapter 3:
False Courage

What about F3?
Well, basically...
F3?
You wanna enter F3?
That's right. Ha ha ha!
DUNLOP
And you easily won two FJ races, so you feel it's time to move on.
Now that Hijiri's gone to F3, you don't have a rival.
I see...

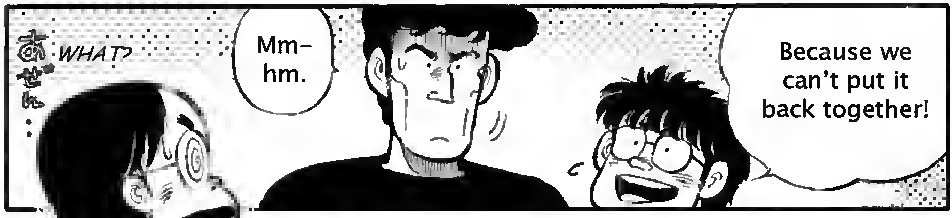
... enemy
No more ...
I don't got an enemy in FJ now!
Heh, that's pretty much it.
Now that Tamotsu jumped ship.
You're in a tough spot, kid.
MORIOKA MOTORS
...I was hopin' you could teach me the ropes.
...so for me to make that jump to F3...
Besides, you know an awful lot about racing...
...
NGK
All you had to think about was racing.
Just as long as good old Tamotsu was there for you.
He took care of all the stuff you hate to do...
...so you could run off at the mouth.

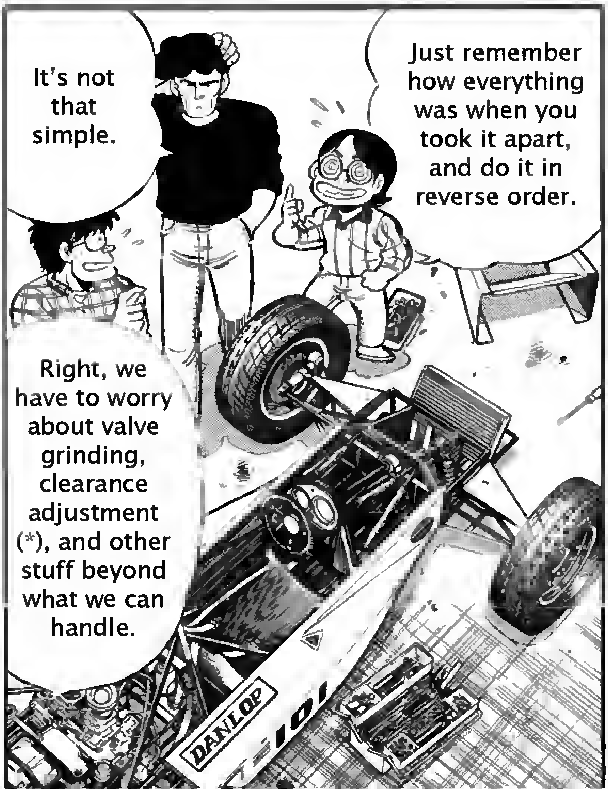
Oh ...
TWITCH
NGK
SPARK PLUGS
That's enough.
Don't even mention his name no more.
Got it?
GRIN
How about some tea?
...
It's a real struggle if you aren't rich enough to pay all the racing expenses yourself.
The cars are really expen-sive.
I know how you feel, Gunma.
GLUG
GLUG
But don't you think it's a little early for F3?

To be blunt...
You bet. We're talking at least 30 million yen per year.
Dang.
Is it really that expensive?
...F3 is full of professionals.
You gotta land sponsors, join a racing team...
...no matter how you cut it, you can't make it with an amateur mentality.
That's amateur at it's finest, son!
Ha ha! You've only won two races, and you're complaining about no enemies?
HA HA HA
You callin' me an amateur?
Hold on.

Then you can start thinking about F3.
No one is gonna care about one or two wins. First you gotta aim for annual champion.
Anyway, don't be hasty.
Win as many FJ races as you can to get your name out there.
GULP
Heh! Piece o' cake!
SLAM
Just gotta keep winnin' then! I'll keep winnin' and become annual champion!
Tsh! Fine!
We'll see about that.
I don't know.

It has to be overhauled.
What should we do ?
But we can't take it apart.
How come?
You never even opened up the engine?
Nope.
These piston rings are loose.




It's not that simple.
Just remember how everything was when you took it apart, and do it in reverse order.
Right, we have to worry about valve grinding, clearance adjustment (*), and other stuff beyond what we can handle.
DUNLOP

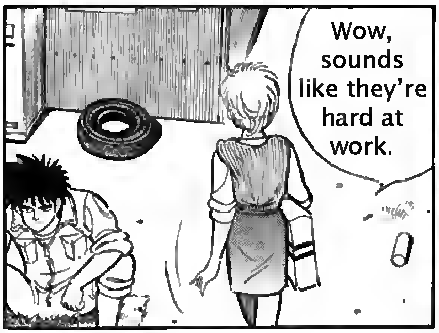
* Valve grinding = To grind the valve areas that join together so that there is no space between them when they are closed.
Clearance adjustment = To make adjustments so that an appropriate amount of space is between the rocker arm and valves.

* Coolant = Antifreeze liquid that is mixed with distilled water to keep the radiator cool.

Then you better not take apart that engine. It could stop working.
Thanks for the help!
Our mechanic is gone for a while.
はは HA HA HA
Yes!
Check this out. There's a crack in this pipe.
No way. I'm working on Tamura's car.
Why don't you take a look at it, Ryu?
How about Nemoto ?
You're just in the zone now and you want everything perfect!
Not really.
Is it really that bad?
Gimme that wrench.
Yo, Ne-moto!
Let's do it.
What do you think?
I can introduce him to you. He's a solid mechanic, used to work for a factory-backed team.
A little eccentric though.
And he's got time on his hands.
I just saw him around here.

Come on, Nemoto. Be a nice guy, will ya?
Okay then. 100 thou-sand.
I couldn't do it for any less than 200 thousand yen. That includes allergy treatment expenses, of course.
Eww, I'm allergic to oil, you know.
Something in my chemical makeup just refuses to tolerate it.
Tsh.
See? Look at these icky bumps.
He's a little foofoo, but he knows his stuff.
Is this guy okay?
OIL
Excuse me. Do I sense some doubt in your voice?
Really think you can get this ready by tomor-row?
Maybe you'd like me to tear this engine into little biddy pieces!
And they say he's got a private team.
Man, he must be loaded!
I heard Hijiri entered F3.
He's on his way to the top.
HA HA HA
CLANG CLANG
POUND
PUTT PUTT PUTT

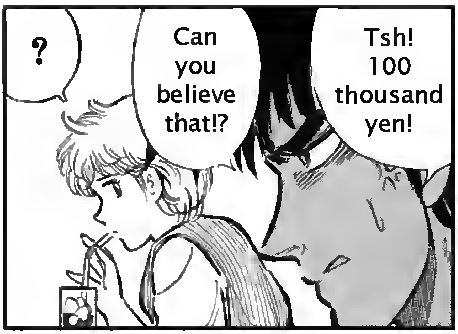
...
SIGH
He's just worried about his car.
Don't blow a fuse, Nemoto.
We'll have to change out every one of these gaskets!
Hmph! Whatever ...
And wash all of these in kerosene!
Oh gross... It's those icky lumps again.

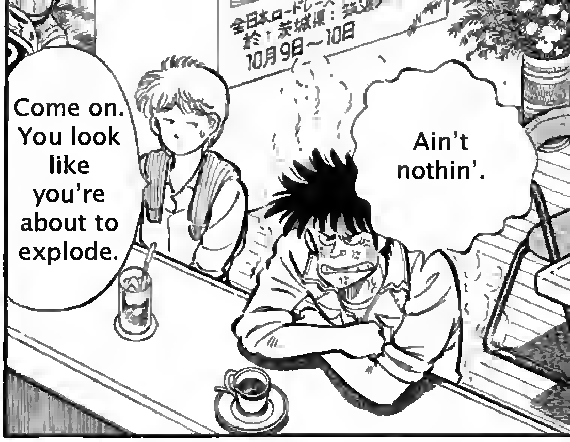

Wow, sounds like they're hard at work.

What's with the long face?

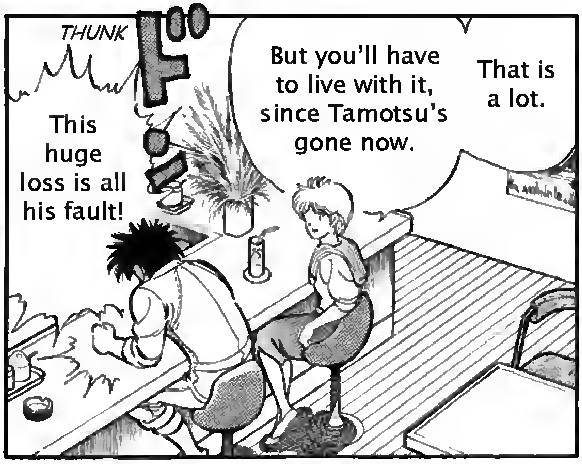
So what's wrong?

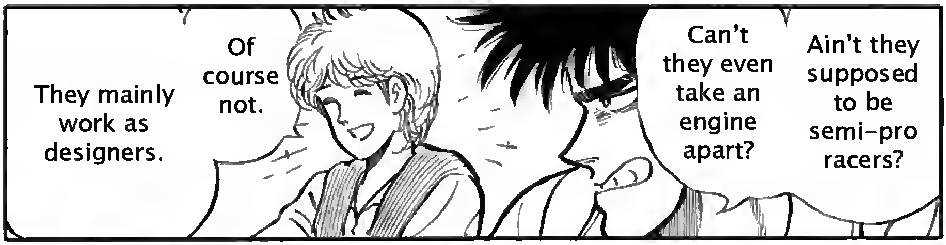
!
CLENCH
Let's go get some tea.


?
Can you believe that!?
Tsh! 100 thousand yen!


全日本ロードレース
於：茨城県
10月9日～10日
Come on. You look like you're about to explode.
Ain't nothin'.

Good for?
And what the hell are Matsuura and Kinoshita good for?


THUNK
This huge loss is all his fault!
But you'll have to live with it, since Tamotsu's gone now.
That is a lot.


They mainly work as designers.
Of course not.
Can't they even take an engine apart?
Ain't they supposed to be semi-pro racers?

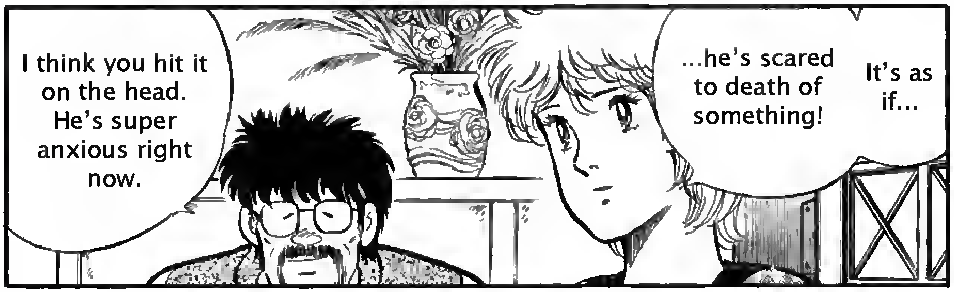
Huh?
?

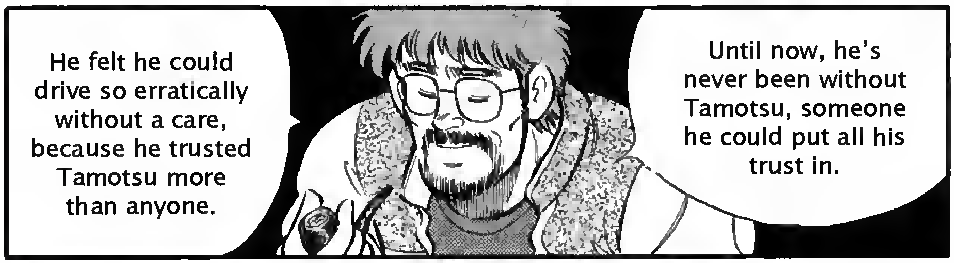
What did you say?
...
SHEEN

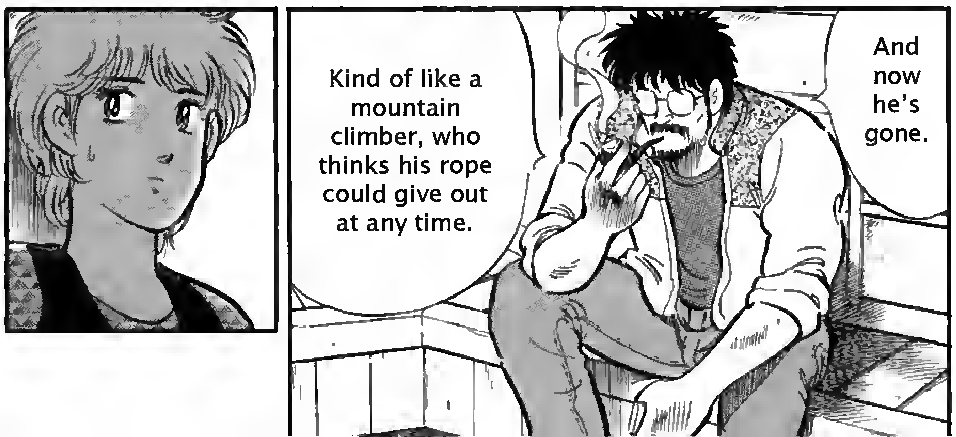
They mainly work as designers?
So they're just on this ride for the fun of it!?
!?
Like some sort of entertainment? For them to go see a race once a month?
Here I am bustin' my ass behind the wheel, gettin' in crashes...
...breakin' bones, and risking my damn life...
...and for those two it's nothin' but a thrill to sit back and watch me work.
What's gotten into you...?
Why would you talk like that?
Something's not right.
I'm... I just...
100 thousand yen is a lot of money!
...
100 thou- sand ...

PURU
PURU
PURU
TAT
TAT
TAT
TAT
TAT
TAT
TAT
TAK
TAK
TAK
SCRAPE
SCRAPE
Shave it down!
HE HE HE HE HE!
...

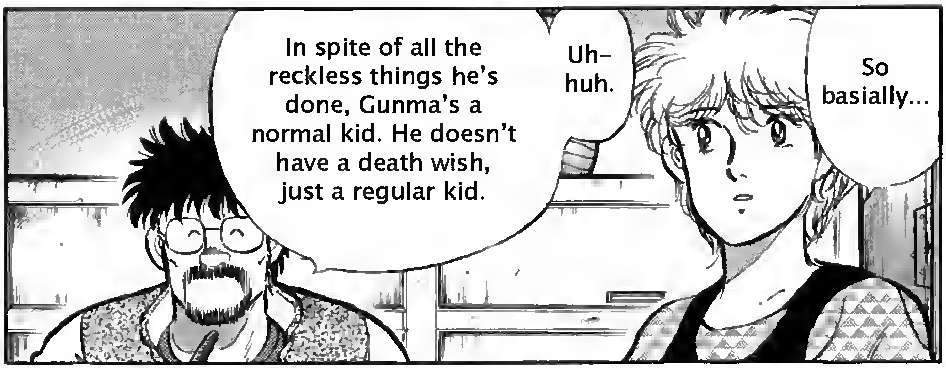
I've never seen that side of Gunma before.
I mean, here he is blaming everybody else, making all these false accusations.
What do you think made him act like that?
I'm shocked.


I think you hit it on the head. He's super anxious right now.
...he's scared to death of something!
It's as if...


He felt he could drive so erratically without a care, because he trusted Tamotsu more than anyone.
Until now, he's never been without Tamotsu, someone he could put all his trust in.


Kind of like a mountain climber, who thinks his rope could give out at any time.
And now he's gone.

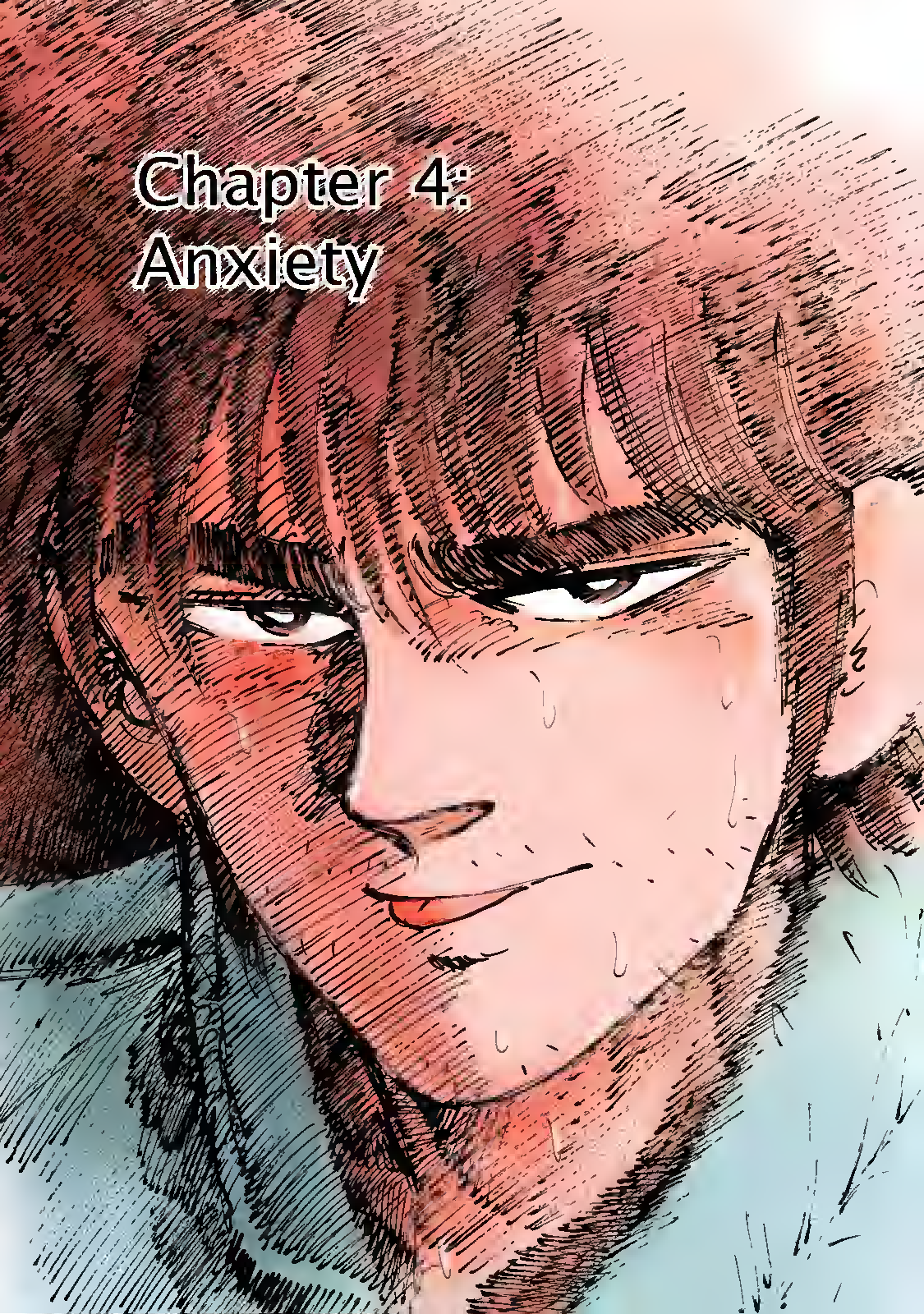
That would be suicidal.
No mountain climber's gonna climb his way up with a smile, when he's hangin' from a rope that could snap at any second.


In spite of all the reckless things he's done, Gunma's a normal kid. He doesn't have a death wish, just a regular kid.
Uh-huh.
So basially...

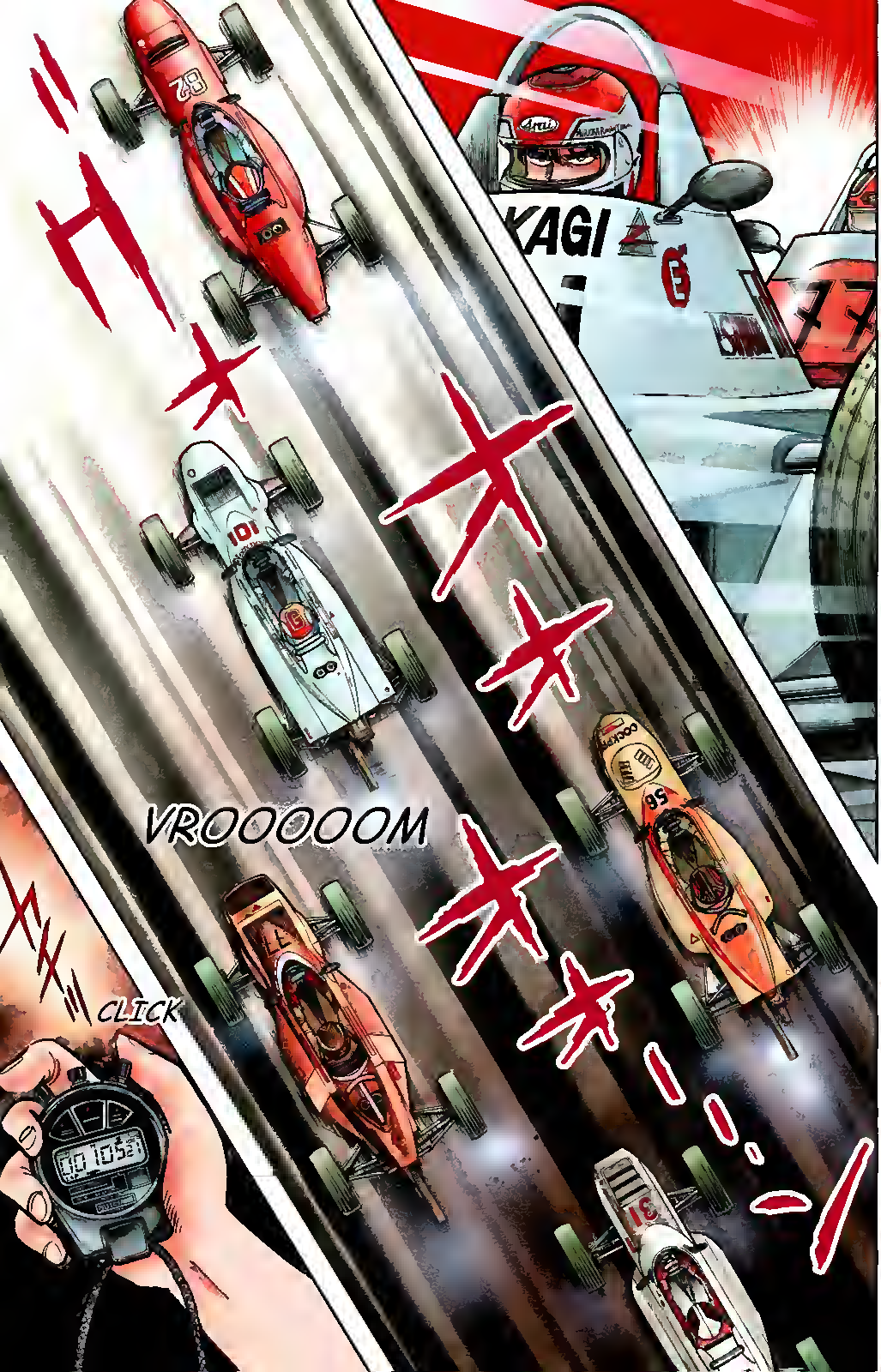
SPLUSH
SPLUSH

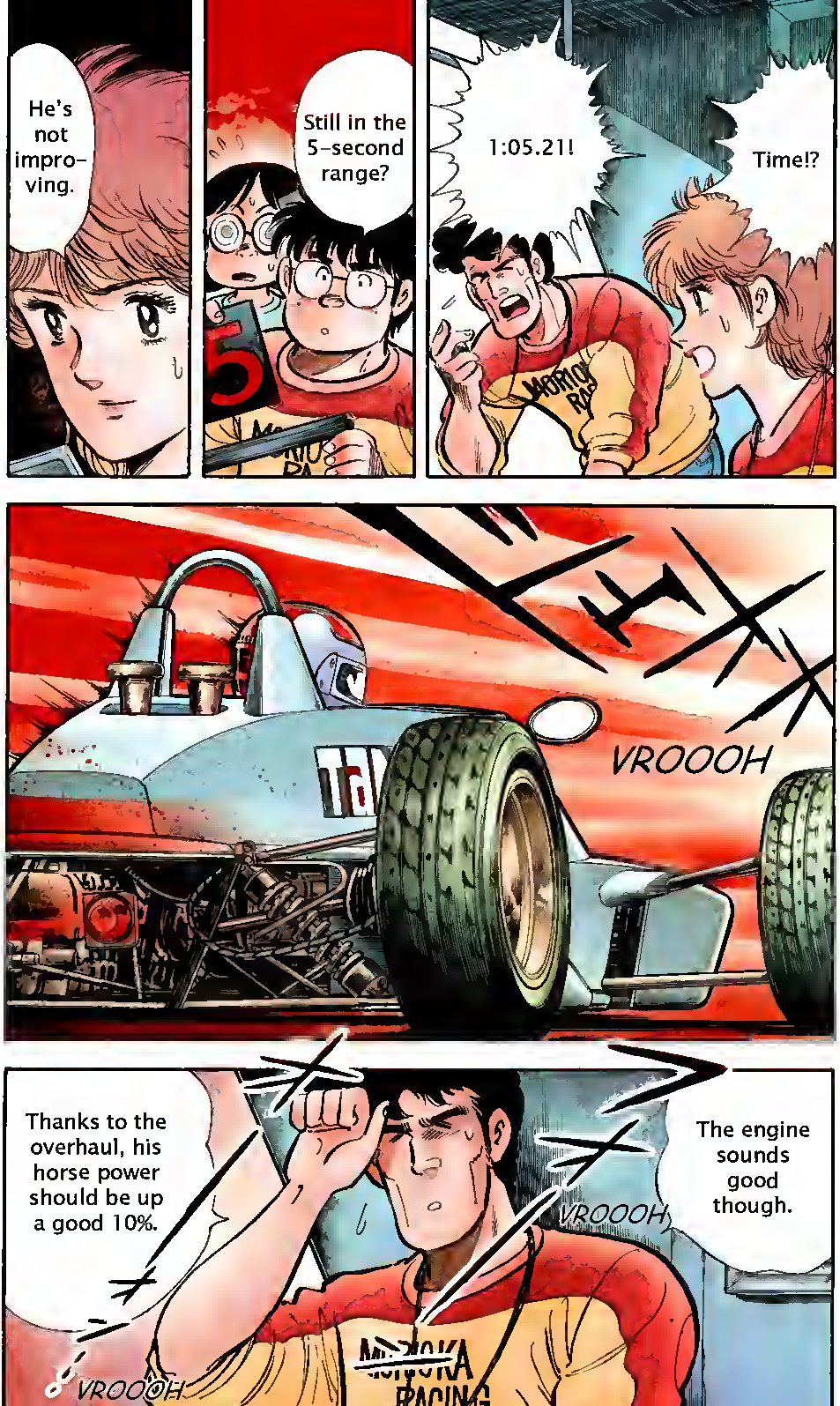
He can't run away from his anxiety.
Poor kid.
He's running out in the rain.
And they're about to come out in full force.
You do have enemies, Gunma.
How are you gonna handle it?
FWIP

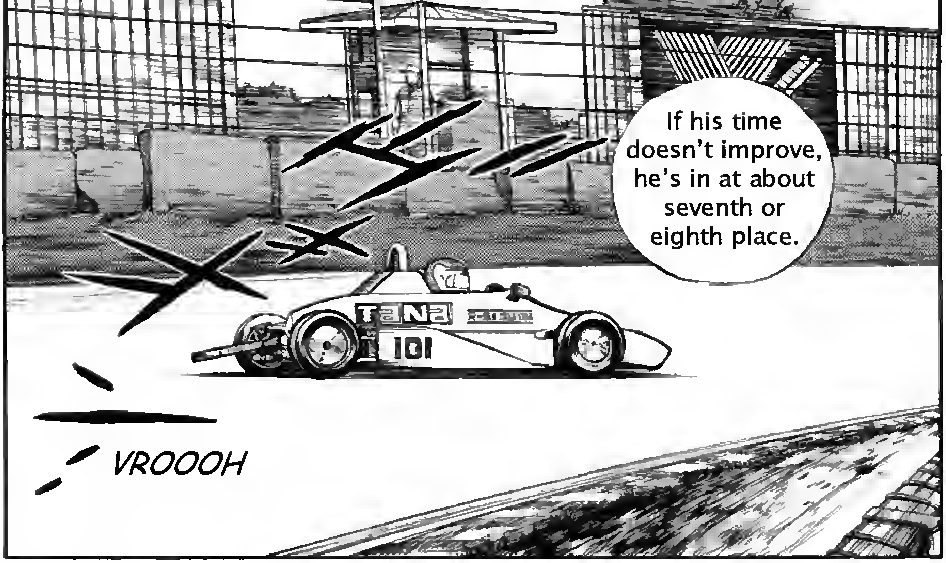
F
VOL. 5

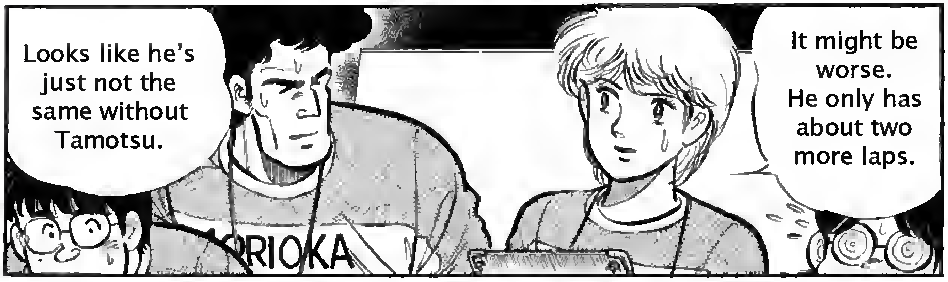

Chapter 4:
Anxiety

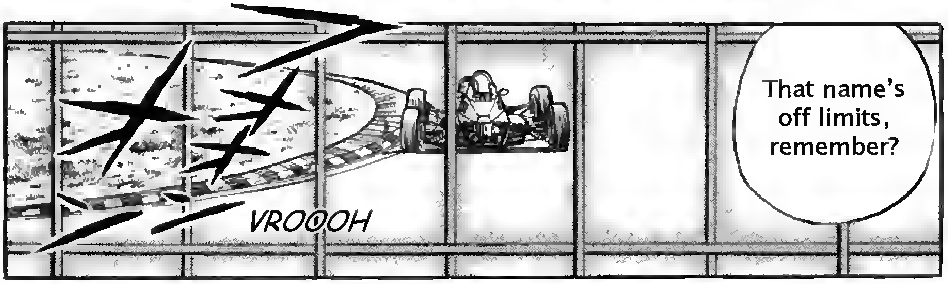
Tsukuba FJ1600B Championship Round 7 - Preliminary
56
COCKPIT
AKAGI
101
ZOOM

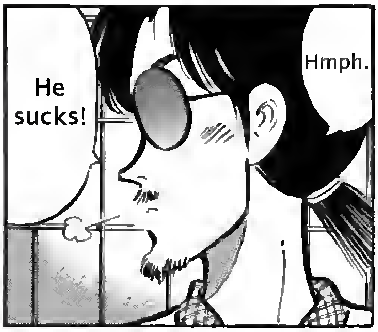

KAGI
VROOOOOM
CLICK

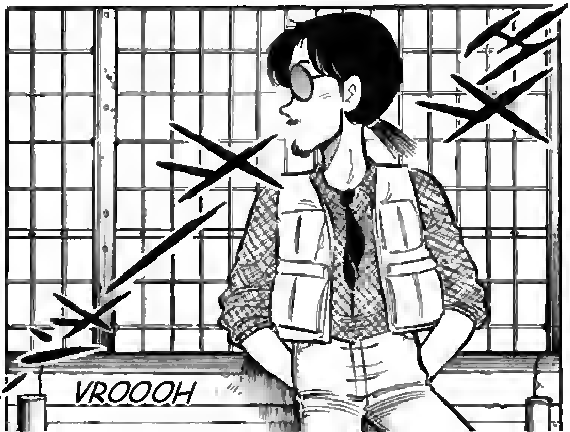

He's not impro-ving.
Still in the 5-second range?
1:05.21!
Time!?
VROOOH
Thanks to the overhaul, his horse power should be up a good 10%.
VROOOH
The engine sounds good though.
VROOOH
RACING


If his time doesn't improve, he's in at about seventh or eighth place.
TaNa
101
VROOOH


Looks like he's just not the same without Tamotsu.
It might be worse. He only has about two more laps.
KRIOKA


That name's off limits, remember?
VROOOH


He sucks!
Hmph.


VROOOH

BROOOH
VRR
37
VROOOM
VROOM
MORIOKA Racing Team
SIGH
FLIP
Arai
MORIOKA Racing Team
GUNMA KA
Hey! I heard your mechanic bailed out on you!
KAGI
MORIOKA Racing Team
GUNMA KAGI

...
Hijiri gets what he wants.
HA HA HA
Apparently him and Hijiri went off to Suzuka together.
Your new mechanic, Nemoto.
Oh yeah, wanna hear somethin' interesting?
HM?
So what's your point?
No-thing
DRIP
DRIP
DRIP
DUNLOP
Wanna know why?
He's got a flaw, and it's a vital one!
Bet you're dying to know!
...but they fired his ass!
He used to work for a pretty famous tuning shop...
NGK

If he doesn't like the driver, he'll do a half-assed job on the car.
He's a hell of a mechanic, but he lets his emotions get in the way.
And that's putting it nicely. Rumor has it that he tunes it to break down on you after about 10 laps!
A vital flaw?
What's that?
...what!?
Say...
...
And two of the drivers went into a coma. No wonder he was fired.
It's just a rumor, but they say he's wasted more than 10 cars.
...maybe that homo likes your vibe!
But hey...

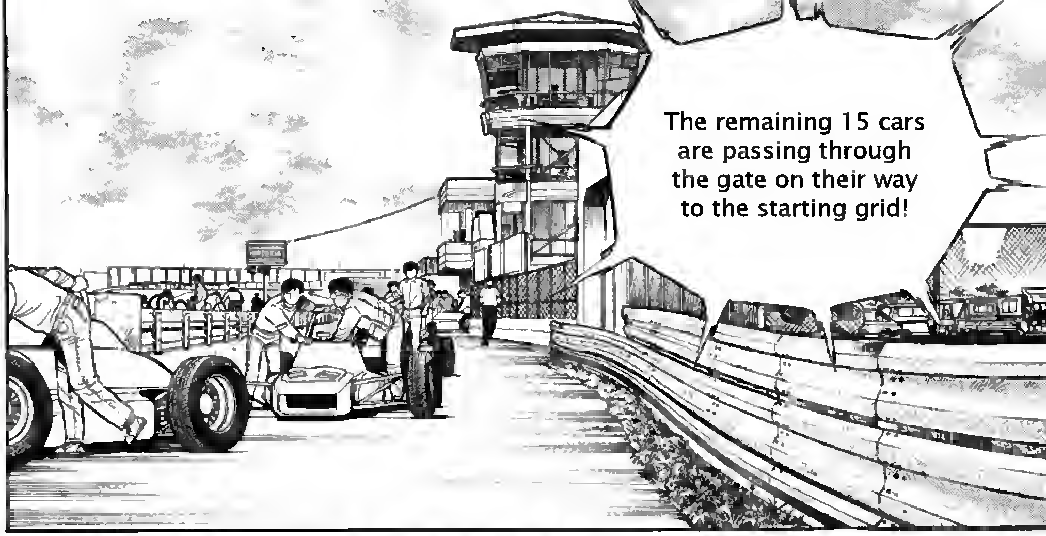
...and pour some coolant down there.
Hey, I want you to get under Akagi's car...
You got some pretty good times, Sunai.
...
With Hijiri in the circuit, I've had to live with second for years, but now that he's gone up to F3, I'm number one! And there's no way I'm letting some punk like you take that away!
Heh heh... Just watch.
...
YAK
YAK
ガガガ
YAK
はっはっ
HA
HA
HA
It's just the preliminary. You can make up for it in the final race.
GUNMA
AKAGI
ガヤ
YAK
ガヤ
YAK
The preliminary results are in.
You got ninth place.
ATAS II
NOTTE MASU

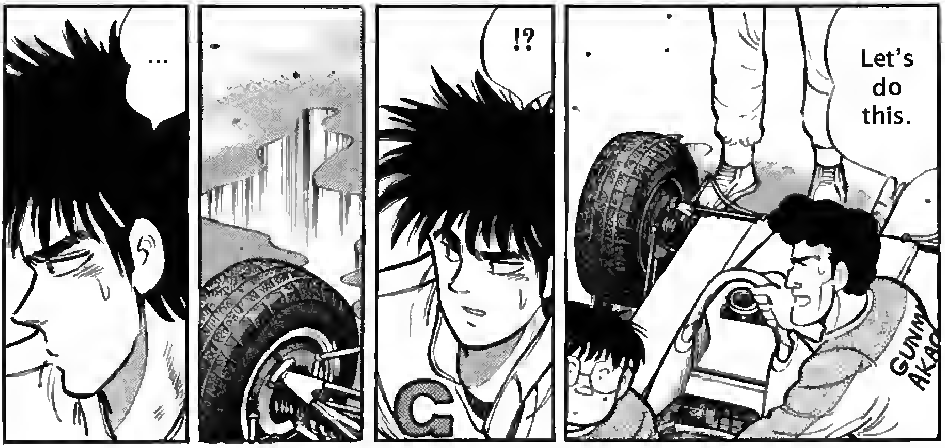
I mean, did it handle well?
What?
...
How was it?
But he adjusted the pedals just like Tamotsu used to.
The thing doesn't take corners like it should.
No, it didn't.
There's a slight difference.
SLURP
It's not the same.
...it's a psycho-logical issue!
Sir Gunma, I'm thinking maybe...
What!?
TWITCH
TWITCH
TWITCH
TWITCH!
!

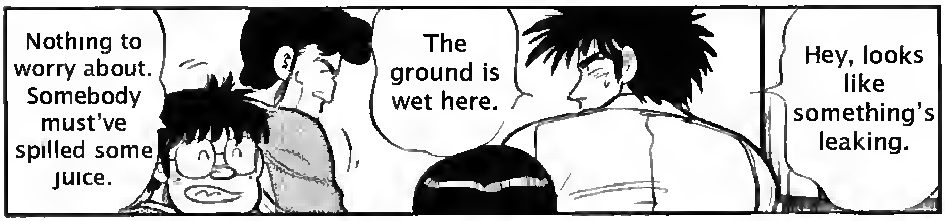
...
THUMP
ゴゴゴ
Ugh... I can't work with people who lack courage!
MORIOKA RACING
That was so... eww.
Can't you drive any better than that!?
You're an embar-rass-ment!
Of course.
You do have it, no? That's what we agreed on.
You need to race like it's your last day on earth.
Anyway, that'll be 100 thousand yen.
What a disappointment. There was no drama, no suspense.
Excuse me!?
Oh no you don't. Not just yet
Oh...
SNATCH

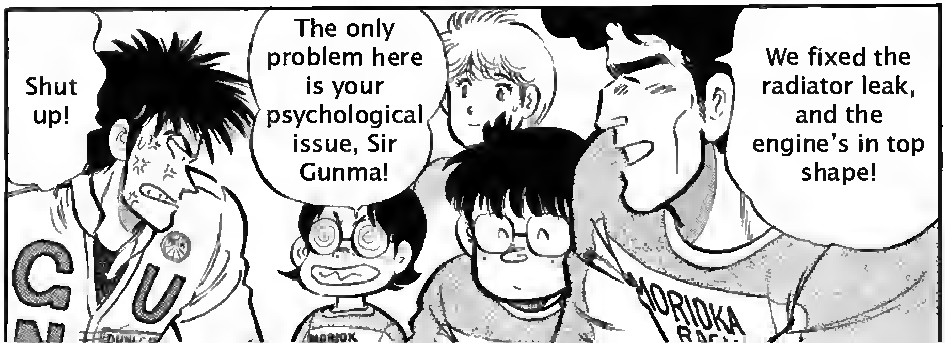
Packag-ing tape?
KA NG
Shut up! Somebody bring me some packaging tape!
56
Is this some sort of vile deception!?
DUNLOP
What are you doing!?
VREEET
You'll get your 100 thousand when I finish the race in one piece!
GUNMA!
But...
STICK

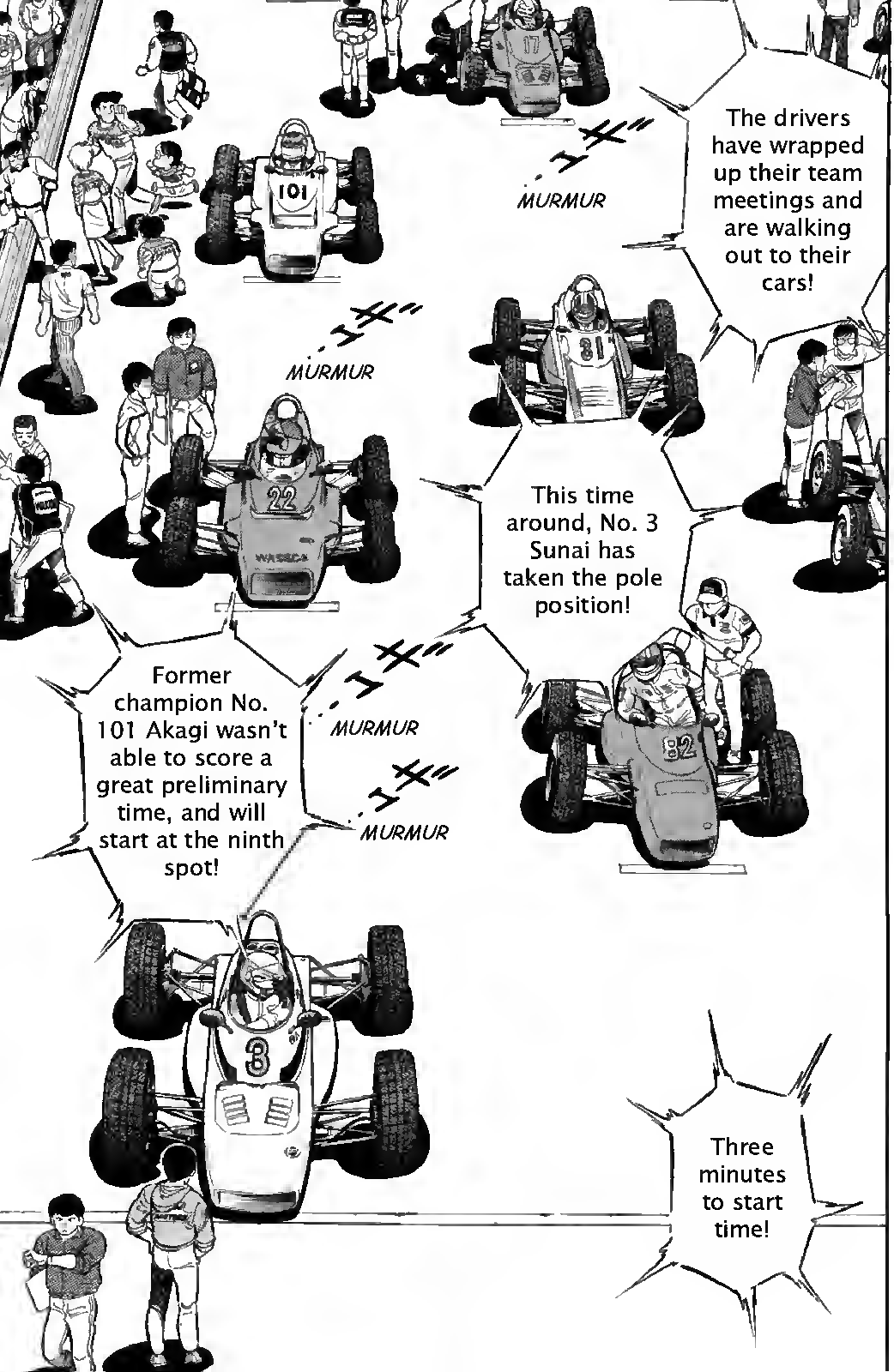
...
MORIOKA
MORIO
RAC
Heh heh heh! I love it!
FLAP
...your type?
Am I...
...I was wonder-ing...
Nemoto, you flamer you...
Ladies and gentleman, the final race is about to begin!
Ab-solutely not!

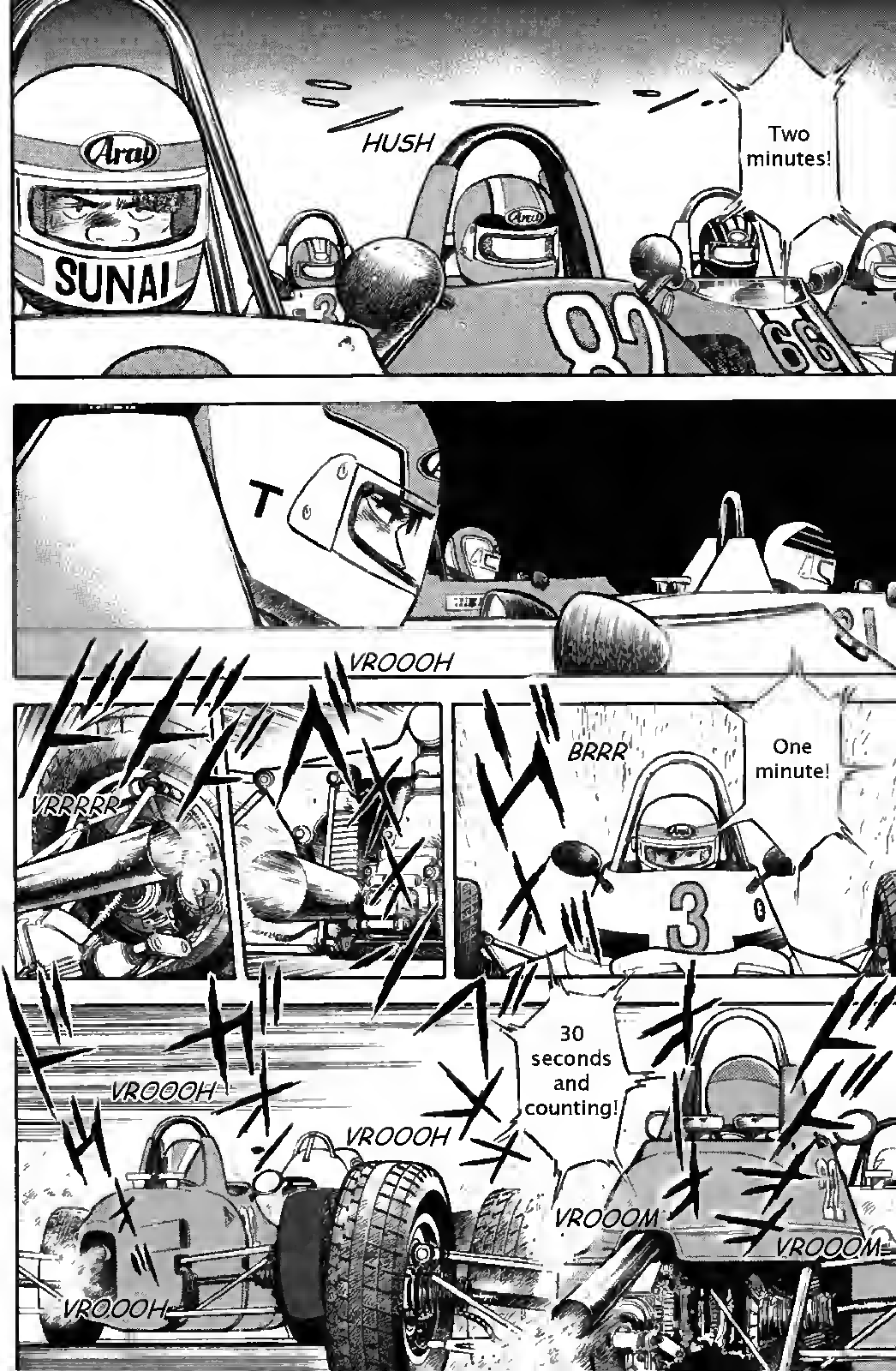

The remaining 15 cars are passing through the gate on their way to the starting grid!


...
!?
Let's do this.

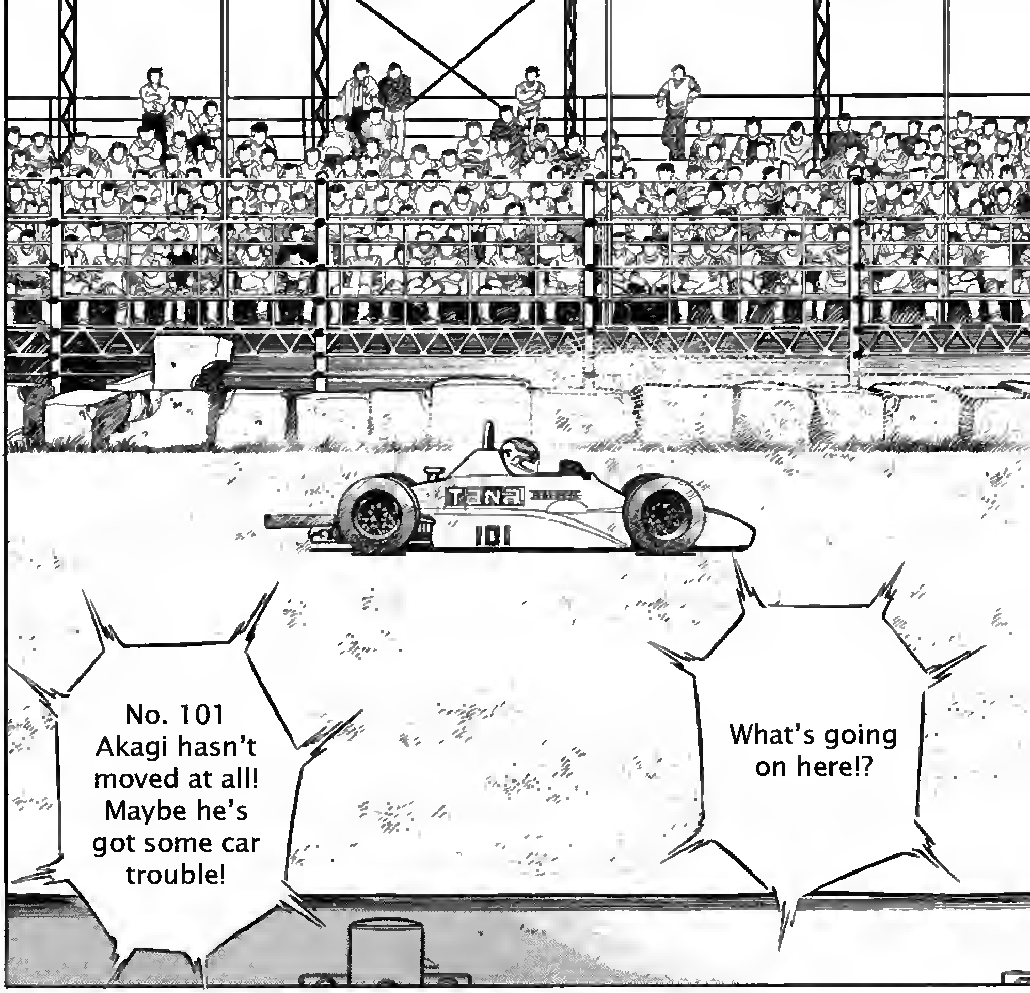

Nothing to worry about. Somebody must've spilled some juice.
The ground is wet here.
Hey, looks like something's leaking.

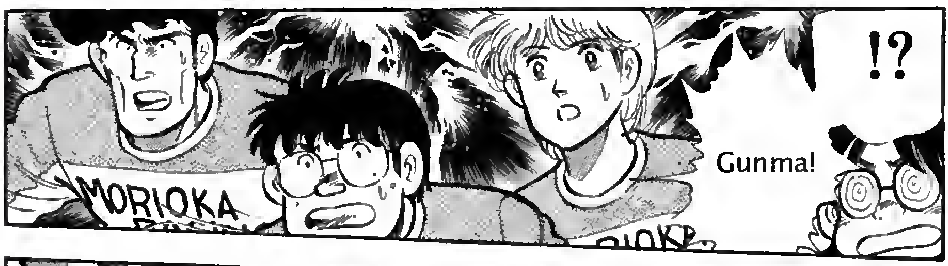

Shut up!
The only problem here is your psychological issue, Sir Gunma!
We fixed the radiator leak, and the engine's in top shape!

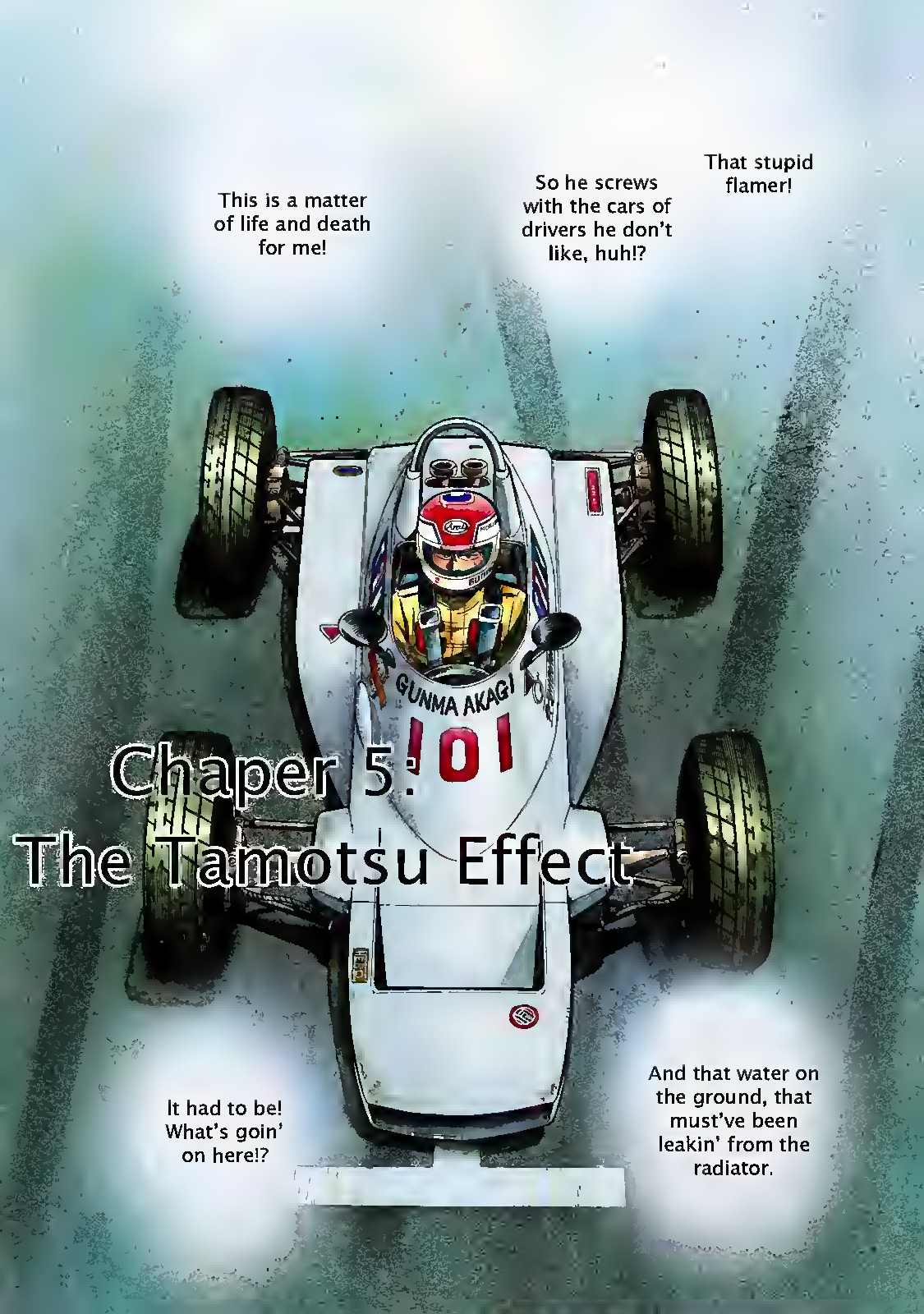

The drivers have wrapped up their team meetings and are walking out to their cars!
MURMUR
MURMUR
This time around, No. 3 Sunai has taken the pole position!
MURMUR
MURMUR
Former champion No. 101 Akagi wasn't able to score a great preliminary time, and will start at the ninth spot!
Three minutes to start time!


HUSH
Two minutes!
SUNAI
VROOOH
VRRRRR
BRRR
One minute!
30 seconds and counting!
VROOOH
VROOOH
VROOOH
VROOM
VROOM

VROOOOOH
OOOOH
BRAAAH
VROOOH
VRRRR
They're off on a single lap, with the pace car out in front.
The cars have started their warm-up run!
VROOOH
VROOH
VROOOH
VRRRR
ZOOOOOH
BRRR
And once they're back to the starting grid, the race will begin!
NISSAN

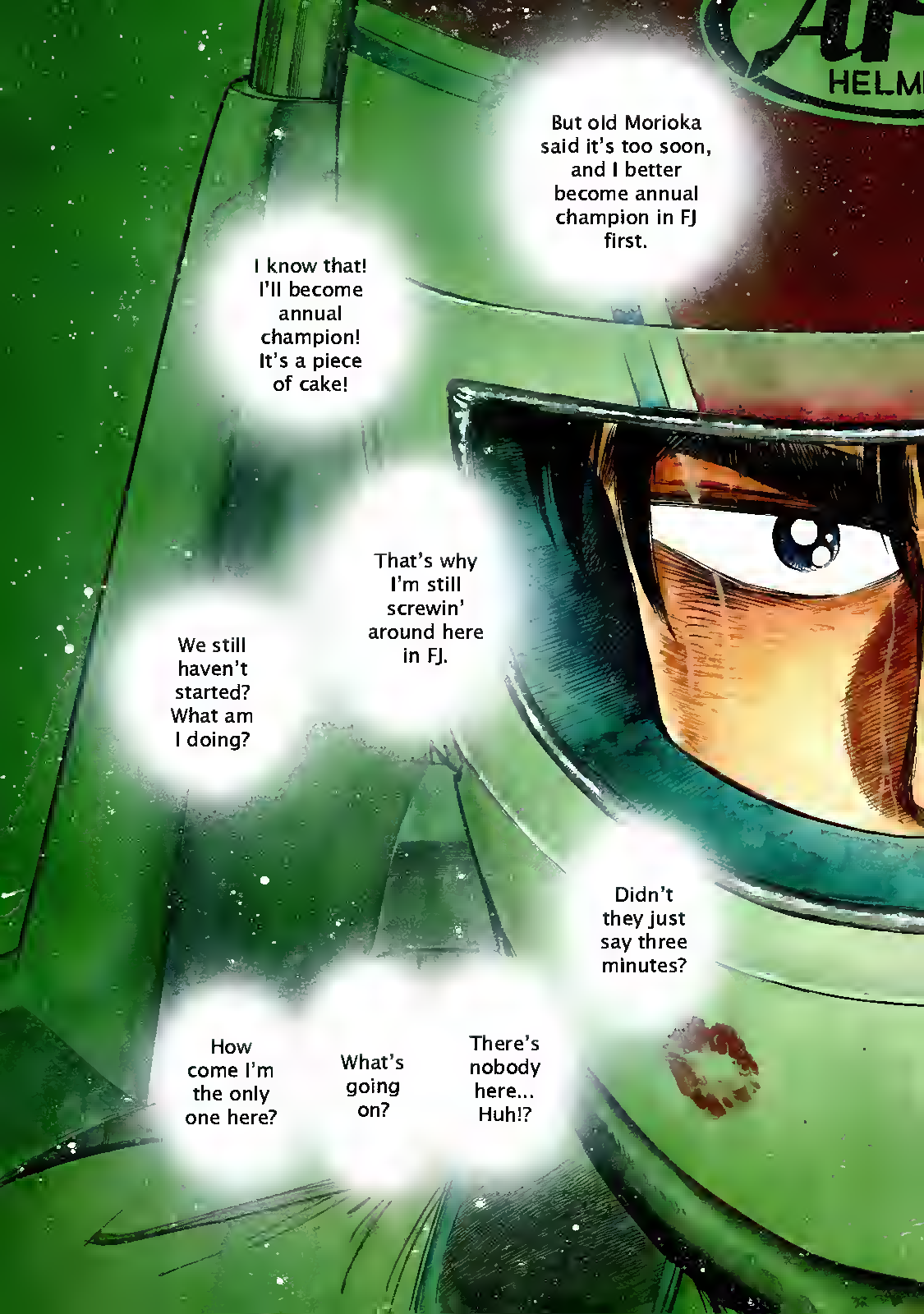

101
No. 101 Akagi hasn't moved at all! Maybe he's got some car trouble!
What's going on here!?


!?
Gunma!
MORIOKA

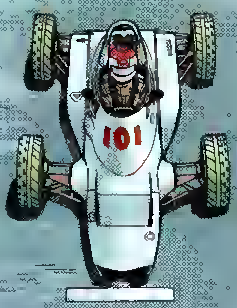

This is a matter of life and death for me!
So he screws with the cars of drivers he don't like, huh!?
That stupid flamer!
GUNMA AKAGI
101
Chaper 5:
The Tamotsu Effect
It had to be! What's goin' on here!?
And that water on the ground, that must've been leakin' from the radiator.

Arai
HELMET
MORIO
But old Morioka said it's too soon, and I better become annual champion in FJ first.
This is all Tamotsu's fault! That fat little scrub!
I know that! I'll become annual champion! It's a piece of cake!
He just had to go off with Hijiri to freakin' Suzuka, so I gotta ask this flamin' homo of a mechanic to fix my damn car!
That's why I'm still screwin' around here in FJ.
We still haven't started? What am I doing?
Didn't they just say three minutes?
Ta-motsu, you little porker you!
I mean, I wanted to move up to F3 right away too!
You would've been better off back in the country, picking mushrooms for your momma!
To hell with Hijiri and F3!
How come I'm the only one here?
What's going on?
There's nobody here... Huh!?

This is all Tamotsu's fault! That fat little scrub!
He just had to go off with Hijiri to freakin' Suzuka, so I gotta ask this flamin' homo of a mechanic to fix my damn car!
Ta-motsu, you little porker you!
To hell with Hijiri and F3!
You would've been better off back in the country, picking mushrooms for your momma!
I mean, I wanted to move up to F3 right away too!


But old Morioka said it's too soon, and I better become annual champion in FJ first.
I know that! I'll become annual champion! It's a piece of cake!
That's why I'm still screwin' around here in FJ.
We still haven't started? What am I doing?
Didn't they just say three minutes?
How come I'm the only one here?
What's going on?
There's nobody here... Huh!?

How come I'm the only one here?



They were just on the grid! Where'd they all go!?

わあっ…

MUTTER MUTTER

No. 101 Akagi still hasn't moved! Maybe it's car trouble, but he still has not moved, folks!

The other cars are on their warm-up run! What could be going on here?

When did that happen!?

Oh crap!

キョロ…

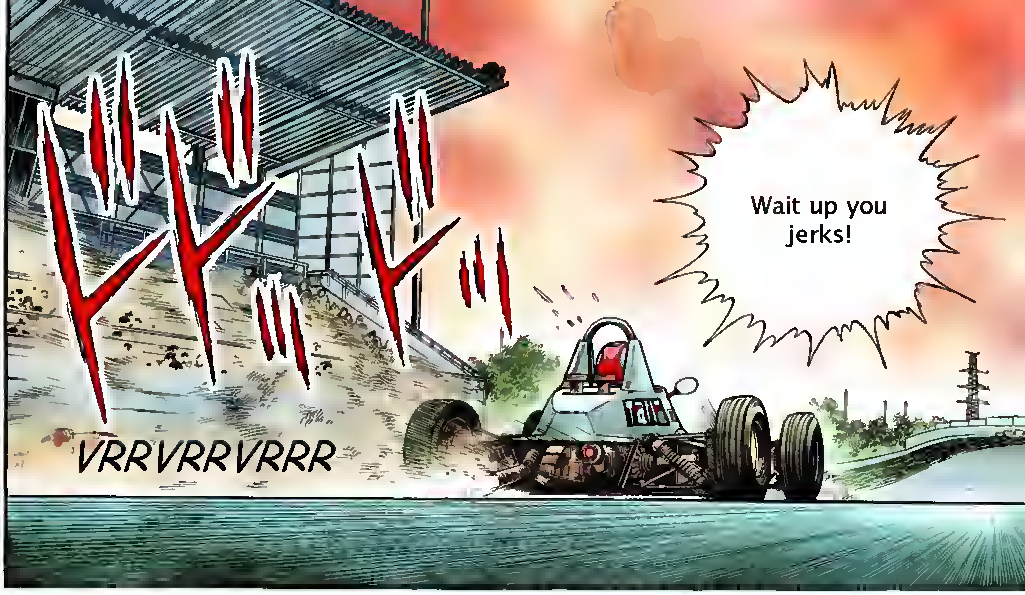
GLANCE

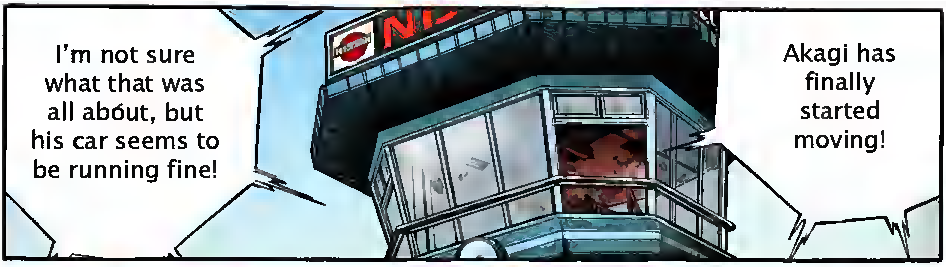
キョロ

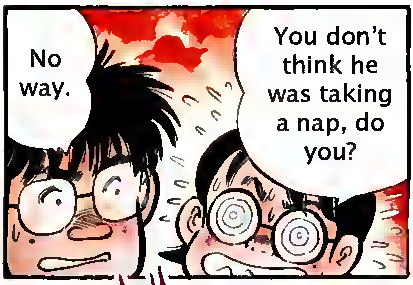
GLANCE

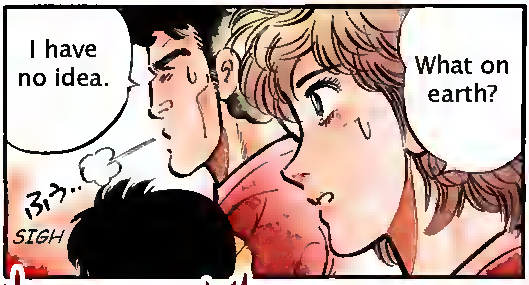
Gunma! What happened !?

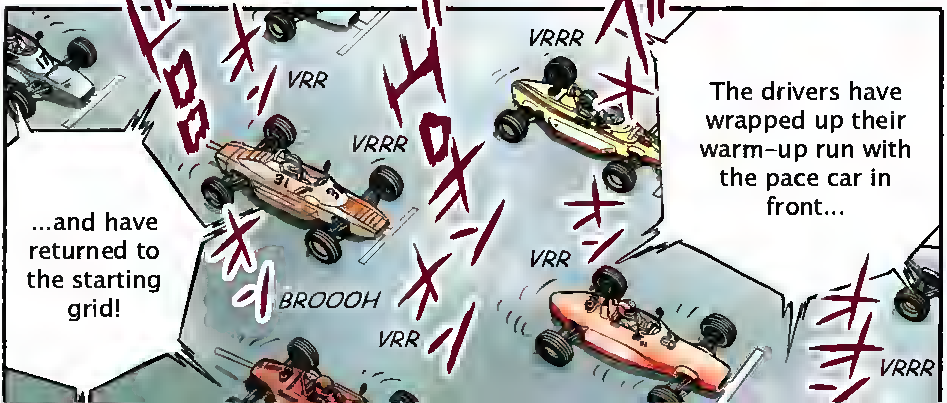
Sir Gunma!


Wait up you jerks!
VRRVRRVRRR

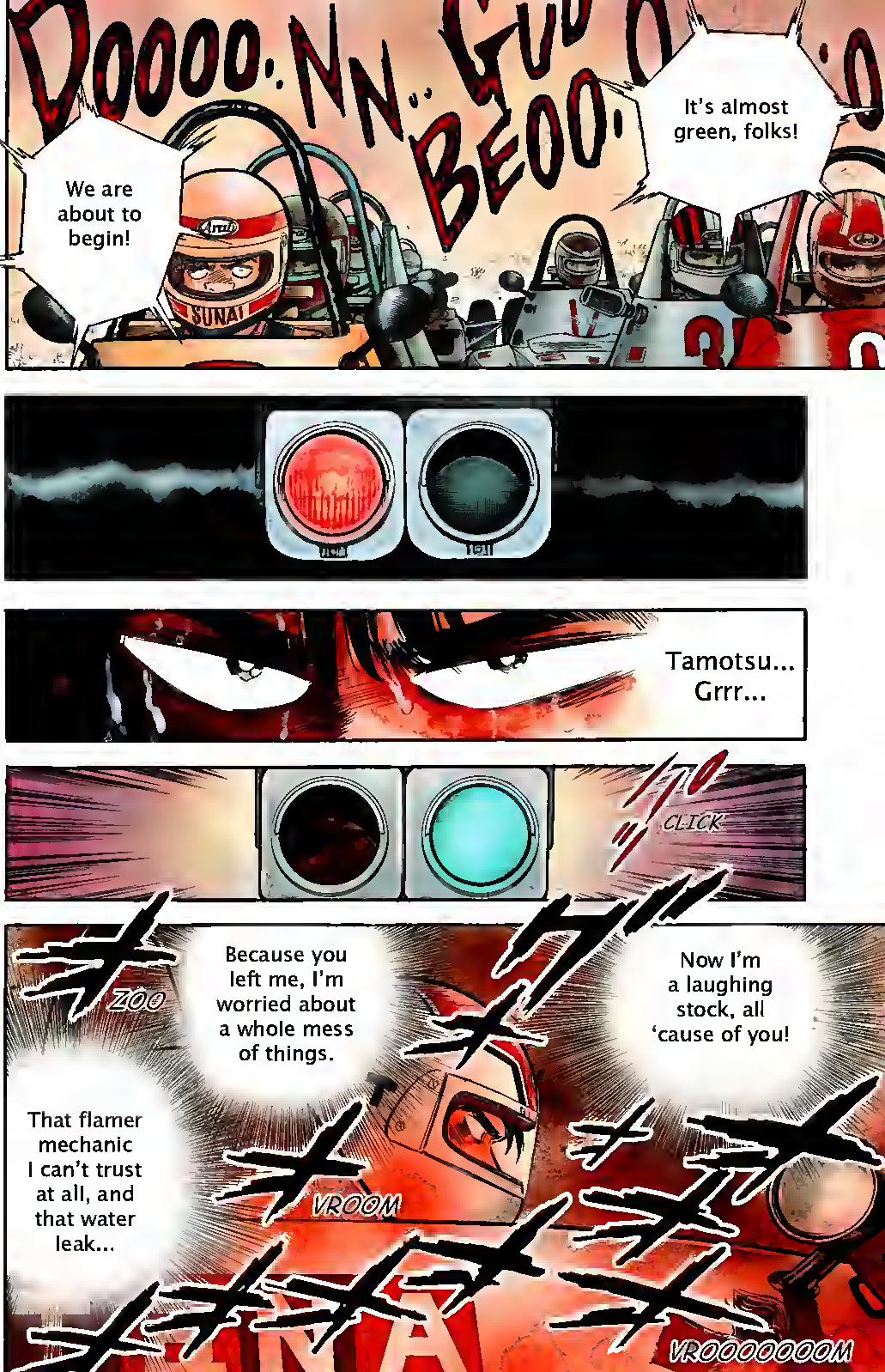

I'm not sure what that was all about, but his car seems to be running fine!
Akagi has finally started moving!


No way.
You don't think he was taking a nap, do you?

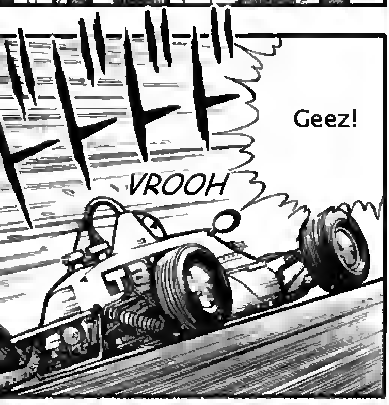

I have no idea.
What on earth?
SIGH


VRR
VRRR
BROOOH
VRR
VRRR
VRR
VRRR
...and have returned to the starting grid!
The drivers have wrapped up their warm-up run with the pace car in front...

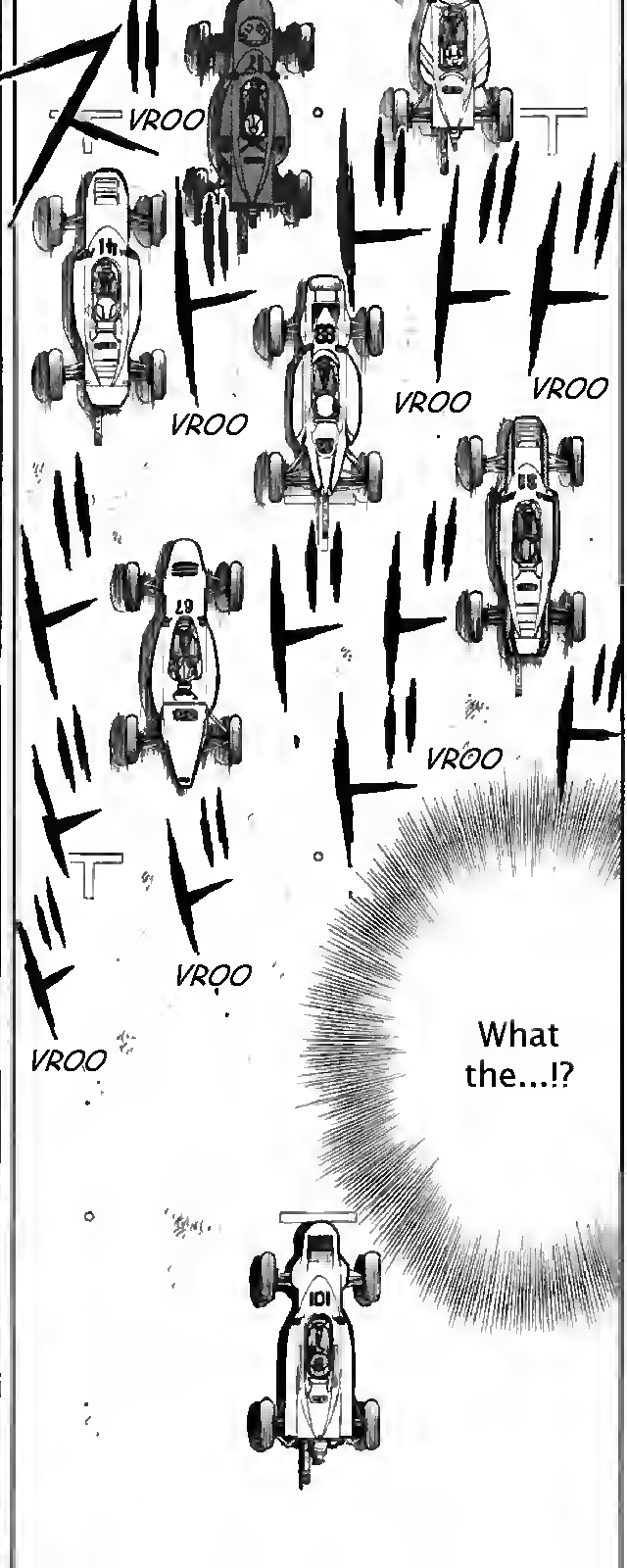
Wait!
Wait!
Wait!
Dammit!
GUNMA AKAGI
VRRRRRRRRRR
Akagi is the only driver who hasn't yet reached the grid! He's driving hard on the back straight!
It's all Tamotsu's fault! That what it all boils down to!
How did that happen!?
I was deep in thought and didn't even notice those bastards take off!
The red light is on!
VRRR
VRRRR
VROOM
VROOM
BROOOH
ZOOOOOM
SCREEECH
Akagi has finally made it back to the starting grid!

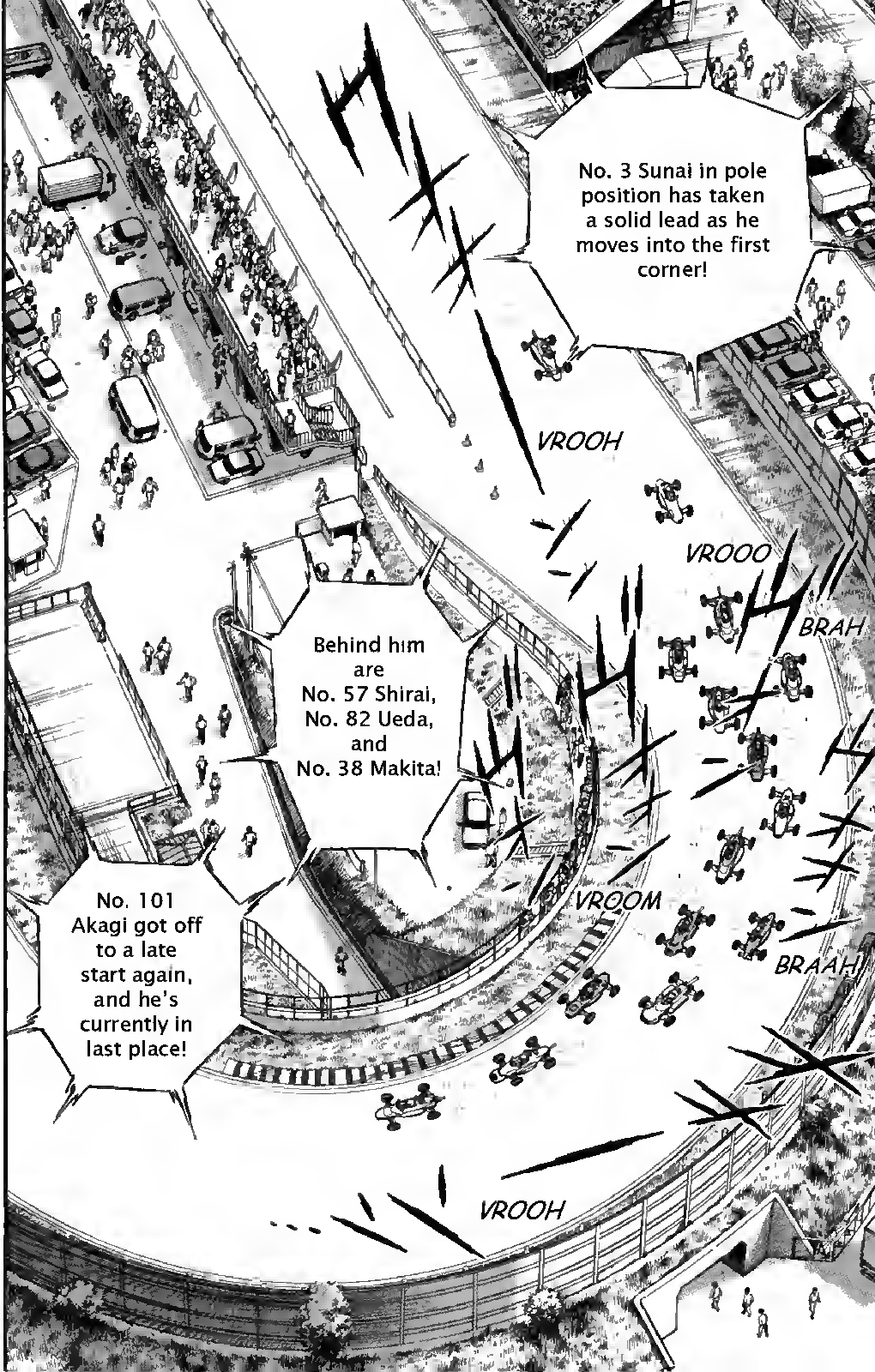

Doooo..nn..
Beoo..
We are about to begin!
It's almost green, folks!
SUNA
Tamotsu... Grrr...
CLICK
ZOO
Because you left me, I'm worried about a whole mess of things.
Now I'm a laughing stock, all 'cause of you!
That flamer mechanic I can't trust at all, and that water leak...
VROOM
VROOOOOOOM

Did I miss the signal again!?
GUNN


Geez!
VROOH

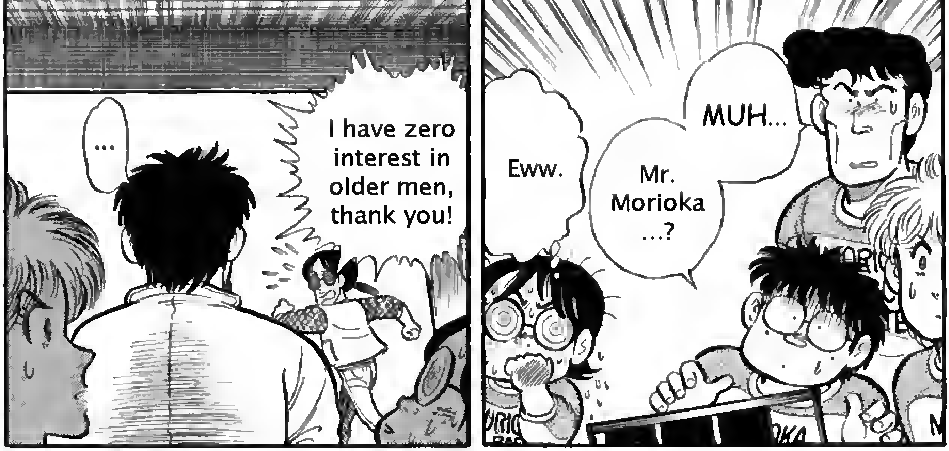
DRIP
タラ…
…
He's dead last.
ORIOKA RACING TEAM

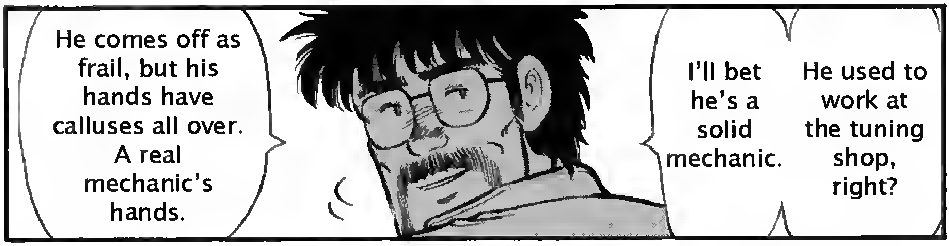

VROO
VROO
VROO
VROO
VROO
VROO
VROO
What the…!?

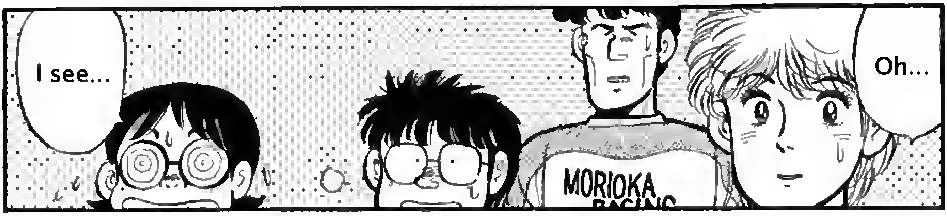

No. 3 Sunai in pole position has taken a solid lead as he moves into the first corner!
VROOH
VROOO
BRAH
Behind him are No. 57 Shirai, No. 82 Ueda, and No. 38 Makita!
VROOM
BRAAH!
No. 101 Akagi got off to a late start again, and he's currently in last place!
VROOH

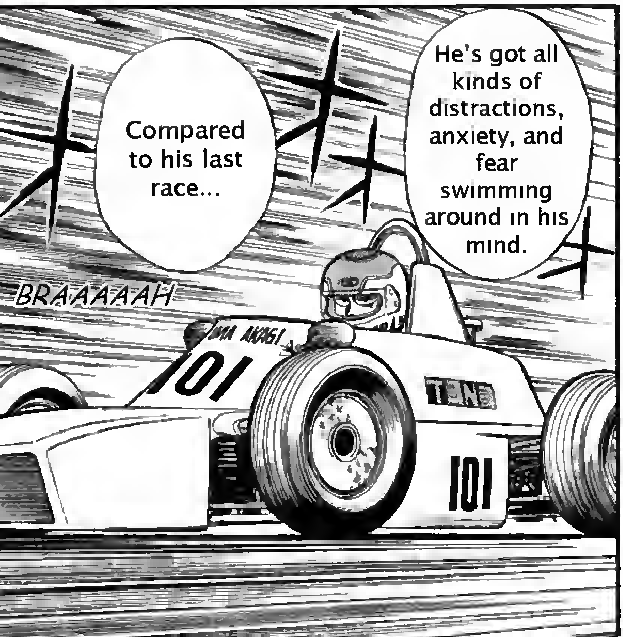
He's dead last!
Now that Tamotsu's gone I've been up to my ears in work, but I had to stop by.
Mr. Morioka ...
How's he doing?
Maybe he had some car trouble or something, but he totally flubbed up the start.
Last place?
DASH
There he is!
Maybe I should've looked it over.
Hmm ...
BRAAAAAH
FLAP
FLAP
Ohhhh my money... My precious, precious money!
THUMP

VROOOH
He doesn't trust me one bit!
Why is he doing this!?
The 100-thousand-yen mechanic.
Who's he?
That money better not fall, you idiot!
Or you're in trouble!
My tuning is second to none! How could he be in last place!?
He must really suck!
HM?
You're cute.
Let go! That hurts!
Wh-What do you want!?
GRIP
STROKE
STROKE

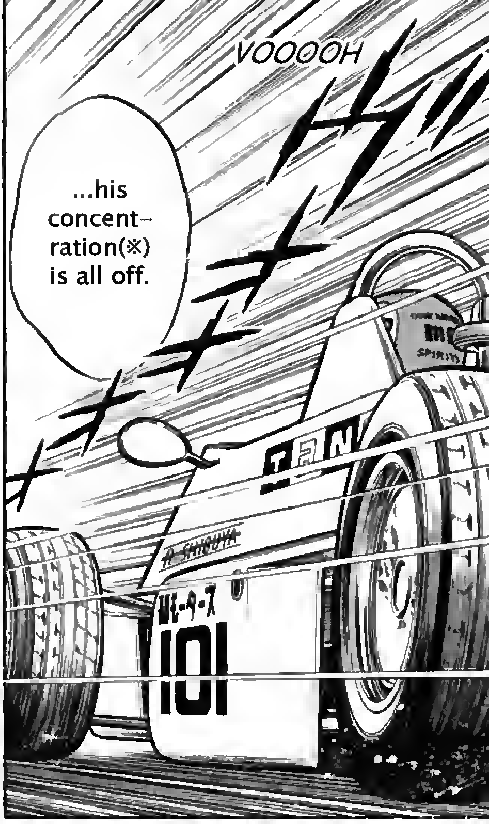

...
I have zero interest in older men, thank you!
Eww.
Mr. Morioka ...?
MUH...

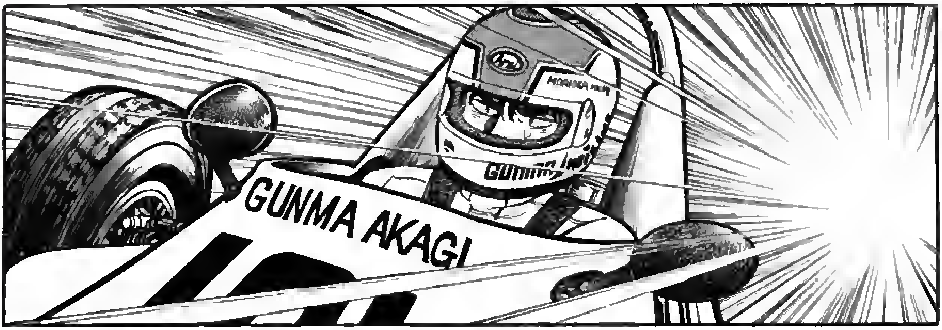

He comes off as frail, but his hands have calluses all over. A real mechanic's hands.
I'll bet he's a solid mechanic.
He used to work at the tuning shop, right?


I see...
Oh...
MORIOKA RACING


Compared to his last race...
He's got all kinds of distractions, anxiety, and fear swimming around in his mind.
BRAAAAAH
101
101

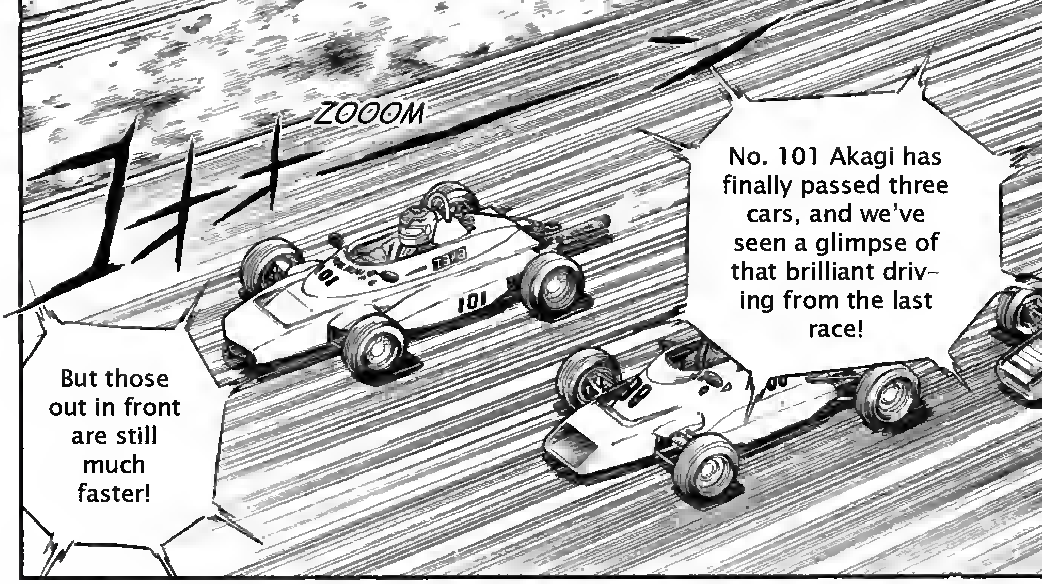
Maybe the problem is in Gunma's head.
Then why ...?
Just as I thought.
GUNMA AKAGI
MORIOKA RACING

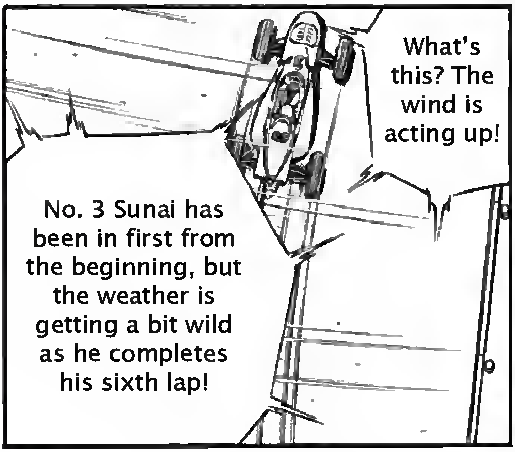


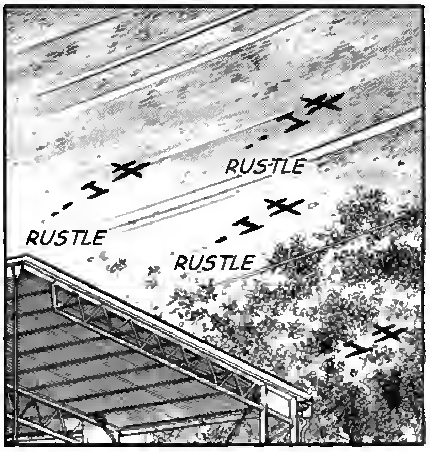


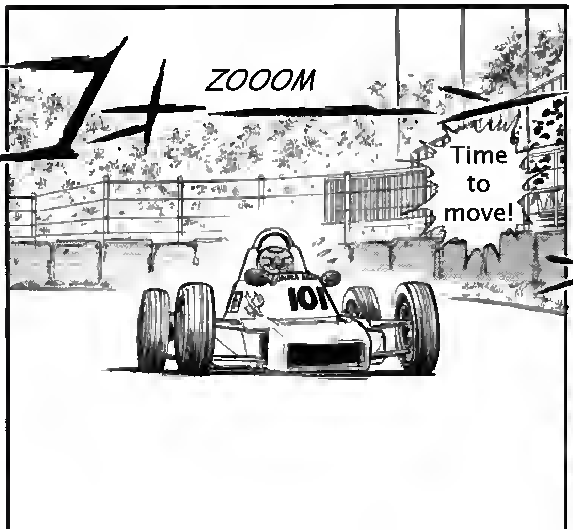
※ Concentration = Ability to focus on the course.

VRRRRRRRR
Why am I so nervous turning into this corner!?
Don't go out on me, brakes!
Come on, now!
Huh!?
Nah, it's all in my head!
Is the steering wheel shaking?
This is pissin' me off!
PUSH
VRRRRRRR
It speeds up pretty well!
ME!
SPIRITS
ZOOOM


ZOOOM
No. 101 Akagi has finally passed three cars, and we've seen a glimpse of that brilliant driving from the last race!
But those out in front are still much faster!

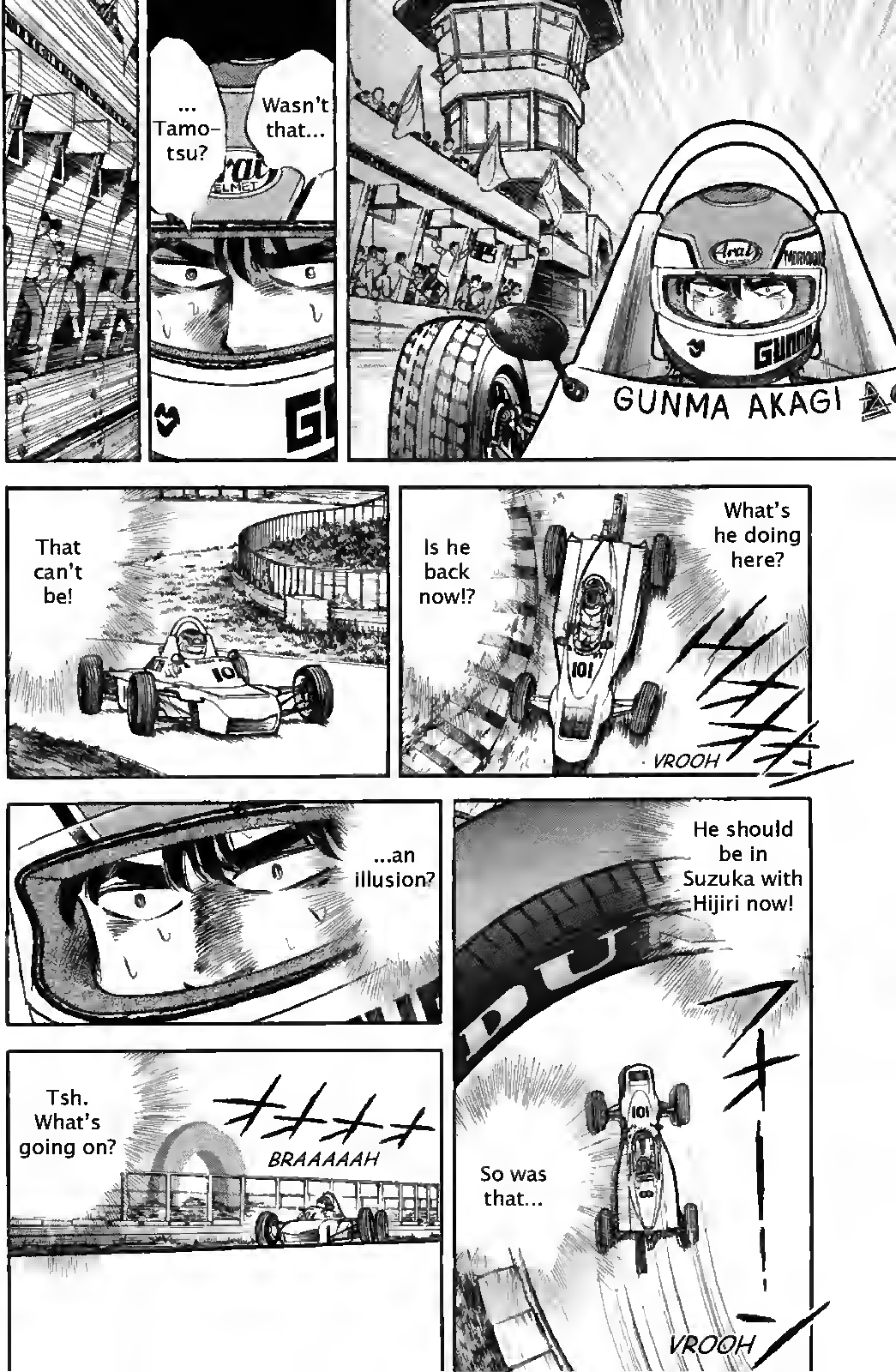

What's this? The wind is acting up!
No. 3 Sunai has been in first from the beginning, but the weather is getting a bit wild as he completes his sixth lap!


RUSTLE
RUSTLE
RUSTLE

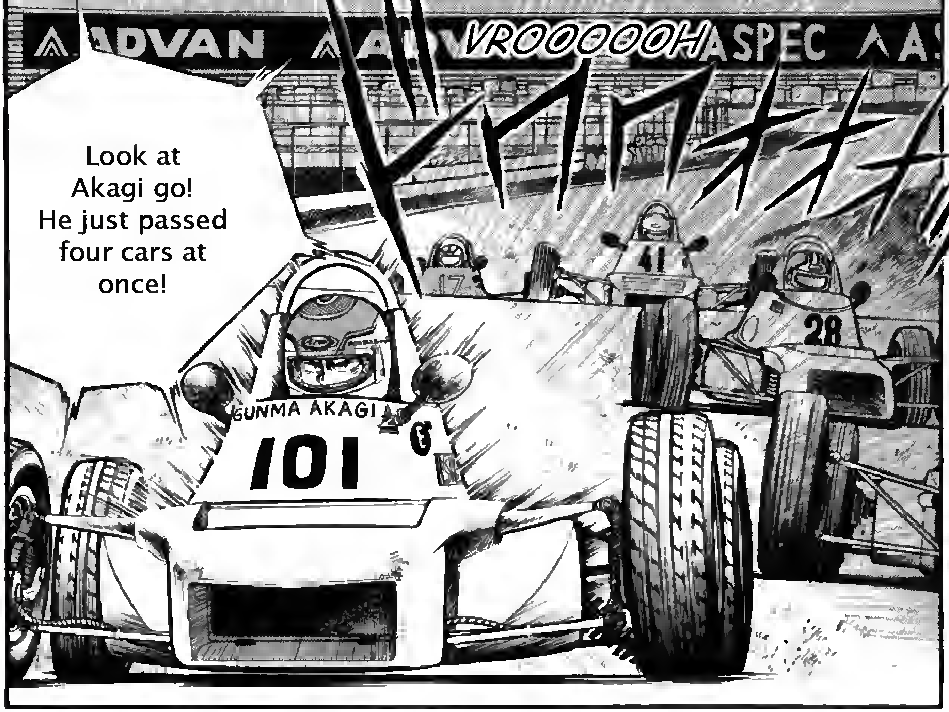

ZOOOM
Time to move!
101

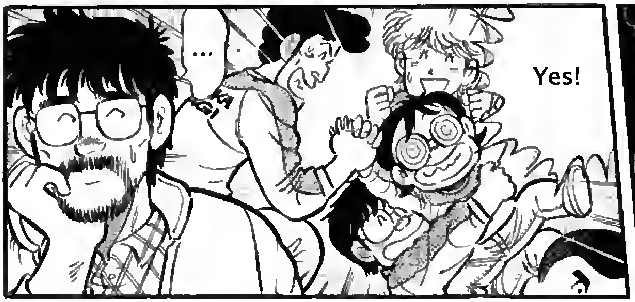
ZOOOOOM
IMPUL
IMPUL

There must be something wrong with this car!
Nine more laps!
DON'T RUN BEFORE
ME!
SPIRITS
I already went six laps and only passed three cars!
GUNMA
Tamotsu, you little twirp!
MORIOKA RACING TEAM
!?
GUNMA AKAGI
Huh!?
MORIOKA RACING TEAM


... Tamo-tsu?
Wasn't that...
GUNMA AKAGI
That can't be!
Is he back now!?
What's he doing here?
VROOH
...an illusion?
He should be in Suzuka with Hijiri now!
Tsh. What's going on?
BRAAAAAH
So was that...
VROOH

...
VROOOOH
GUNMA
101
Okay! Act natural!
There he is!
MORIOKA RACING TEAM
...
ZOOOM
MORIOKA RACING TEAM
Come on, you think he'll be fooled by this?
Of course! I know it'll work. People used to call me an art prodigy when I was a boy.
MORIOKA RACING TEAM
VROOOH
Did it work !?


VROOOOOH
Look at Akagi go! He just passed four cars at once!
GUNMA AKAGI
101
41
28


...
Yes!

!!

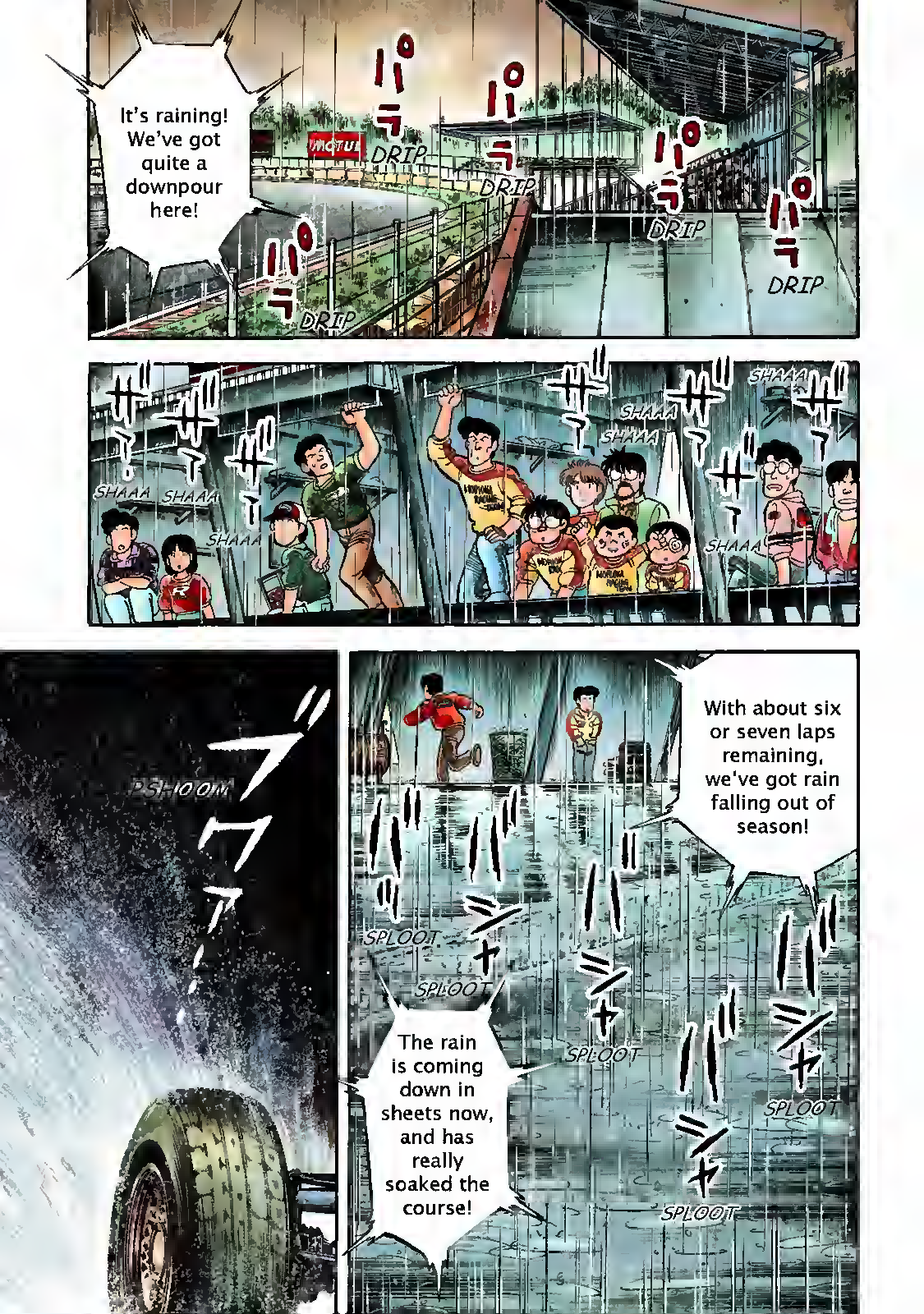
Oh no...
FWOOOH
FWOOOH

...!
Nice work, Gunma!
WOO HOO
YIPEE

F

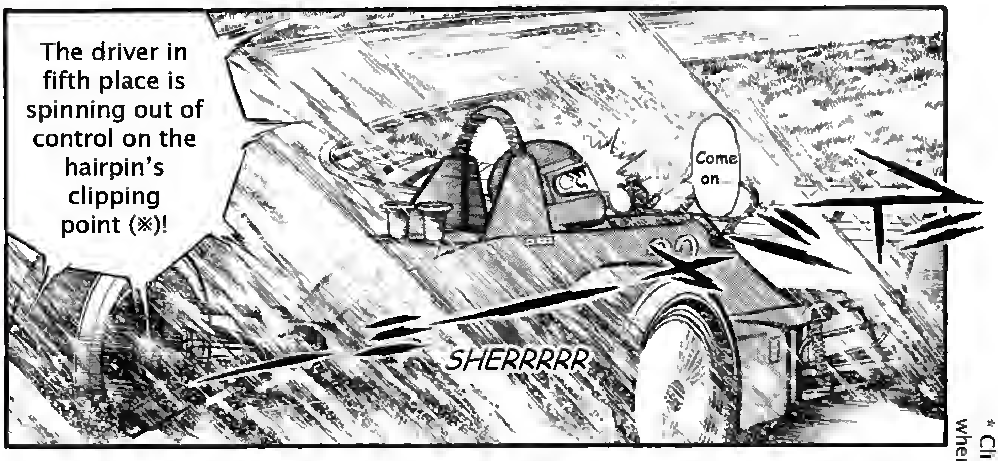
VOL. 5

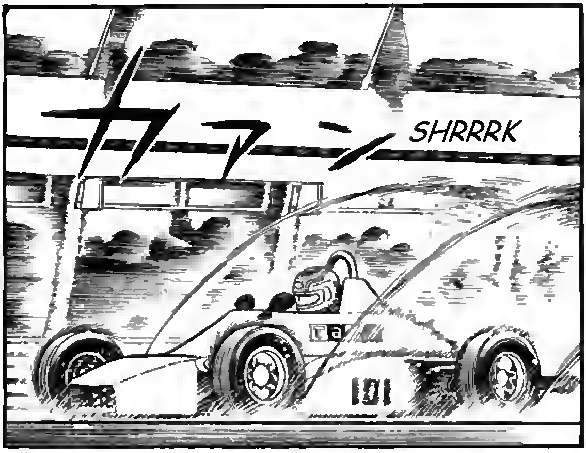
Chapter 6: Race in the Rain


It's raining! We've got quite a downpour here!
DRIP
DRIP
DRIP
DRIP
DRIP
SHAAA
SHAAA
SHAAA
SHAAA
SHAAA
SHAAA
ブワァ!
PSHOOM
With about six or seven laps remaining, we've got rain falling out of season!
SPLOOT
SPLOOT
SPLOOT
SPLOOT
SPLOOT
The rain is coming down in sheets now, and has really soaked the course!

57
5
3
ZSSHHH

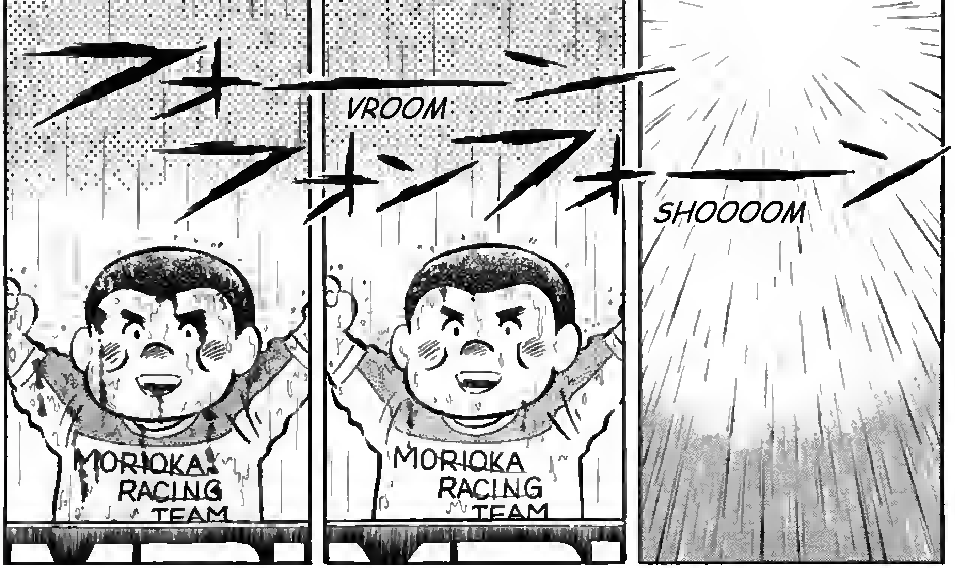
PSHOOOH
Geez!

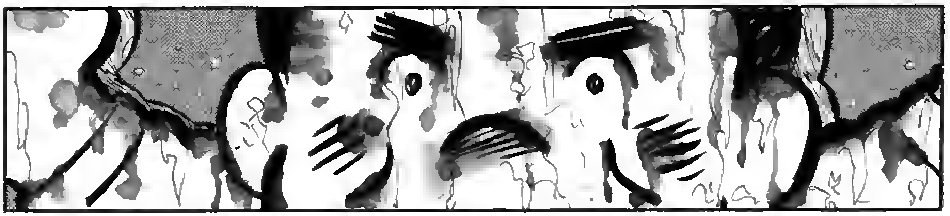


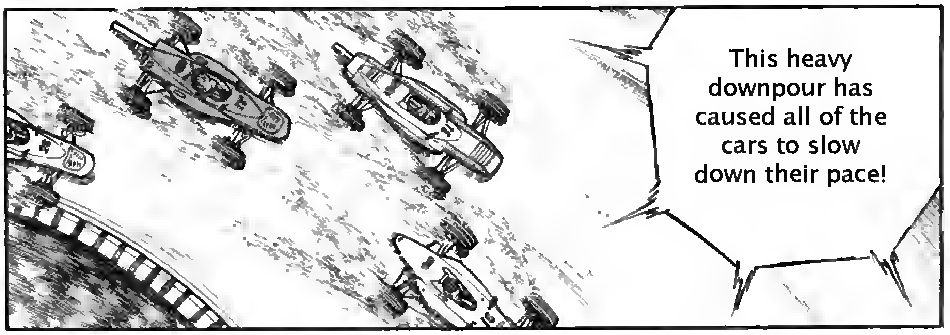


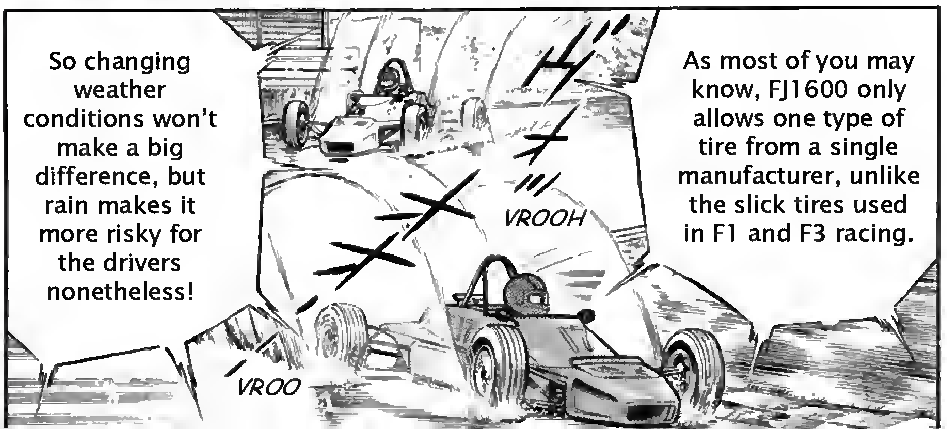
* Clipping point = The point of a curve where the car is closest to the inside of the corner.

HA HA HA
As long as we've got this wooden Tamotsu, Gunma is dumb enough to keep racing!
This rain is terrible. And Gunma was just starting to make a move...
It's fine!
ZOOOOOM
MORIOKA
I'm rather shocked, actually. Tamotsu's presence has a bigger effect on Sir Gunma than I imagined.
...once he finds out Kishida painted Tamotsu on this cut-out.
MORIOKA
I'm sure he'll be mad though...
...seems to have gotten his head back in the race.
Which shows how simple he is.
Right. Knowing that Tamotsu's in the pit rooting him on...


VROOM
SHOOOOM
MORIOKA RACING TEAM
MORIOKA RACING TEAM



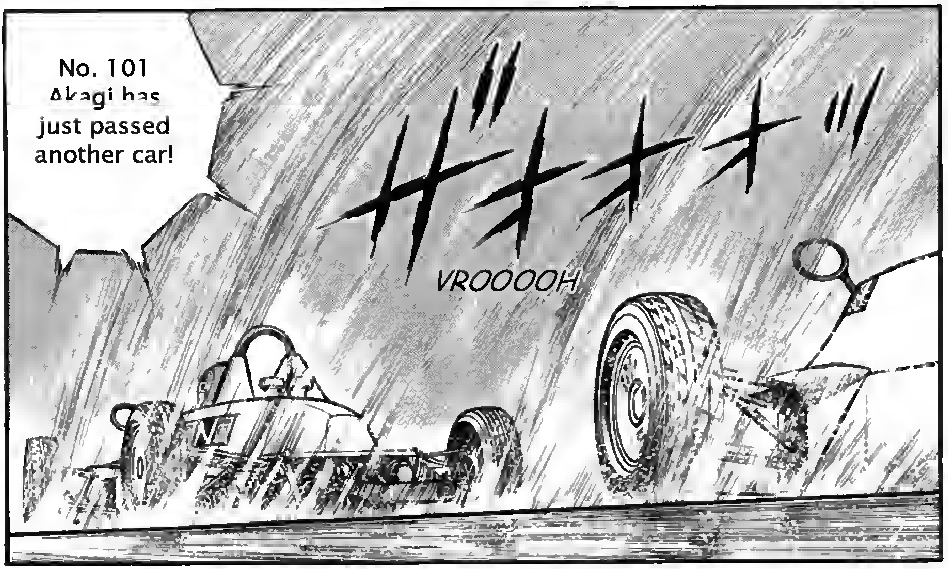

This heavy downpour has caused all of the cars to slow down their pace!

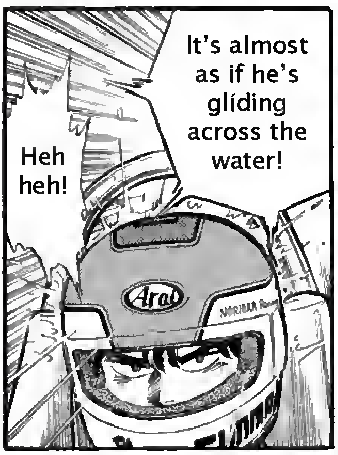

So changing weather conditions won't make a big difference, but rain makes it more risky for the drivers nonetheless!
VROOH
VROO
As most of you may know, FJ1600 only allows one type of tire from a single manufacturer, unlike the slick tires used in F1 and F3 racing.

...can even take away visibility completely in many cases.
!!
SHOOM
28
Of course, the track loses a good deal of grip when wet, and visibility is hindered.
Water splashing up from the front tires...
Arrgh!
One of the lower ranking cars was unable to make the turn, and is off the course!
WOOSH
28
This race has suddenly spiraled into confusion!
PSHOOH
NAKAGI
01

...but that's what rain does!
The steering wheel may shake, and the brakes may be weak...
I gotta stop worrying about stupid things! Even if the radiator's leaking, the rain water might cool it down!
Grrr! That's enough!
Heh! Tamotsu ...
GUNMA
Gotta stop thinking about trivial stuff!
You came back, huh!?
You may act all harsh, but I know you're worried about me!
How is he making this time in the rain!?
He's really moving now!

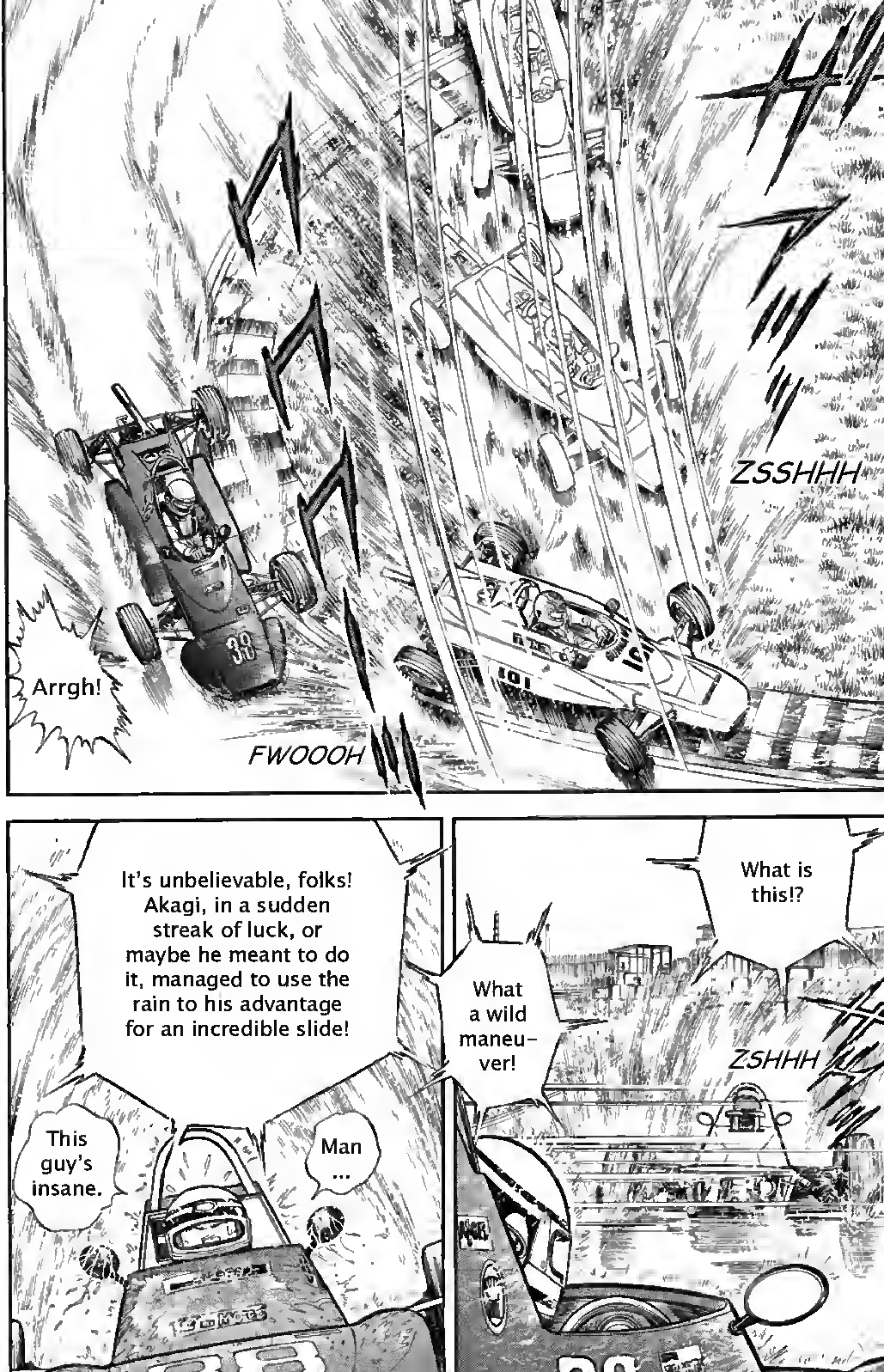
SPLISH
Atta way, Gunma!
DRIBBLE
DRIBBLE
DRIBBLE
SPLISH
SPLISH


No. 101 Akagi has just passed another car!
VROOOOH

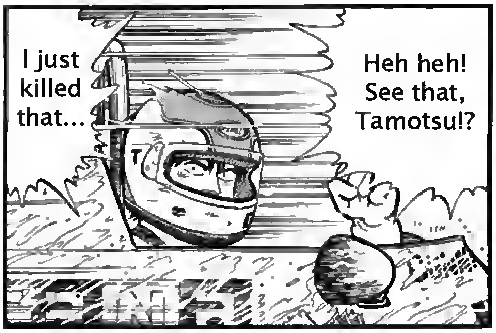

Heh heh!
It's almost as if he's gliding across the water!
Arai

Akagi has shaken off his slow start and is driving brilliantly!
Akagi is the only driver who has picked up the pace in this rain!

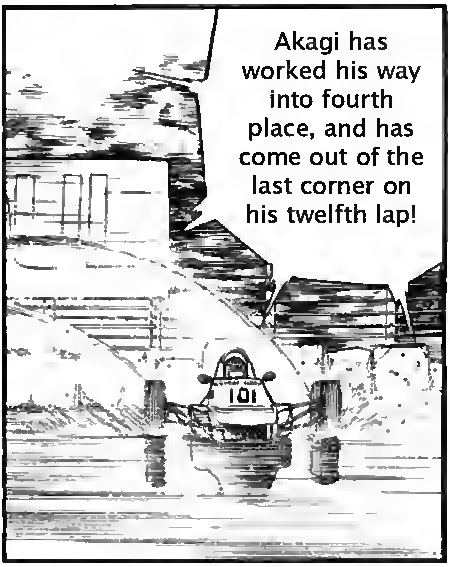
MORIOKA Racing
Now I'll really get 'em on their feet!
SWOOSH
PUSH
Full speed!
Oh my! Akagi is spinning out of control!
No I ain't.
SHOOH

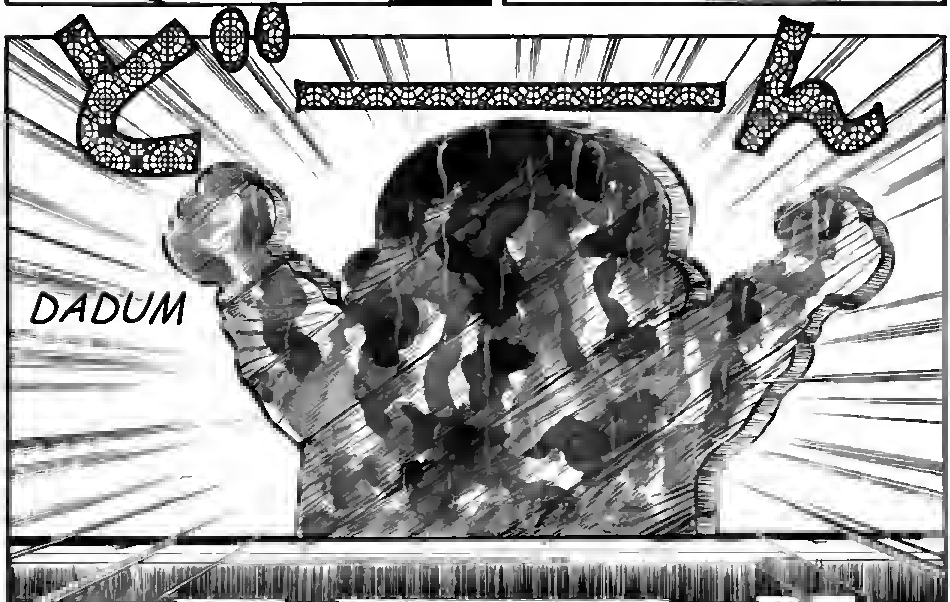

ZSSHHH
Arrgh!
FWOOOH
It's unbelievable, folks! Akagi, in a sudden streak of luck, or maybe he meant to do it, managed to use the rain to his advantage for an incredible slide!
This guy's insane.
Man ...
What is this!?
What a wild maneu-ver!
ZSHHH

...and he used it to pass the cautious driver in front of him, almost as if he was toying with
Wow ...
NISSAN
The rain-soaked grass is as slick as ice...

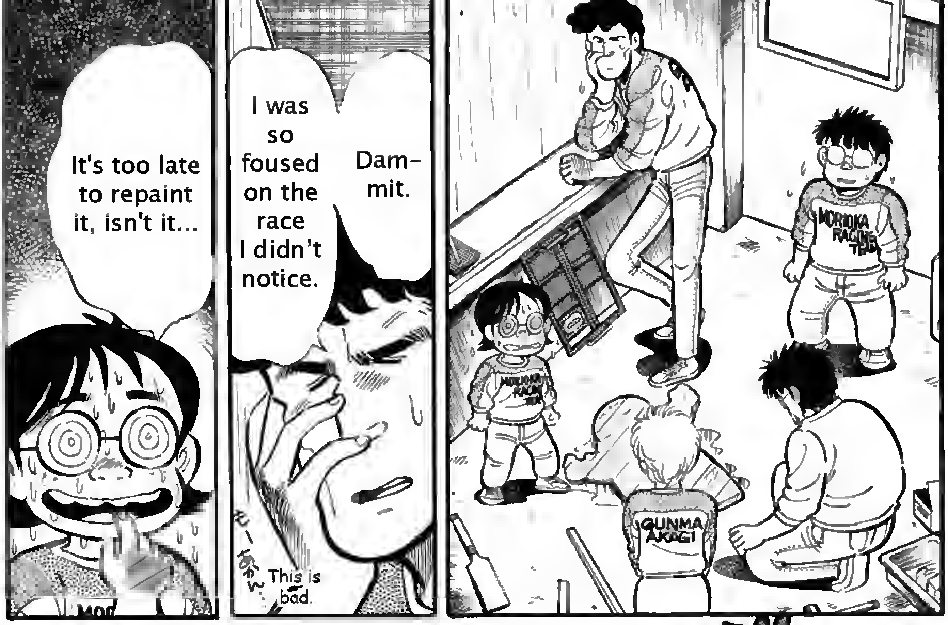

I just killed that...
Heh heh! See that, Tamotsu!?

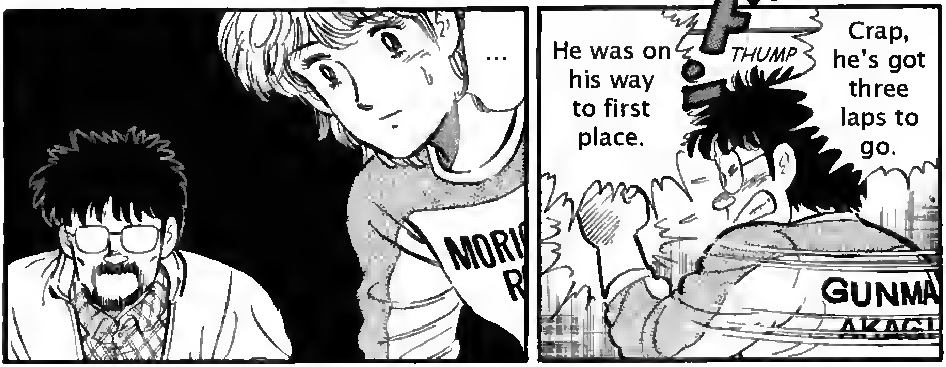
!!


Akagi has worked his way into fourth place, and has come out of the last corner on his twelfth lap!
101

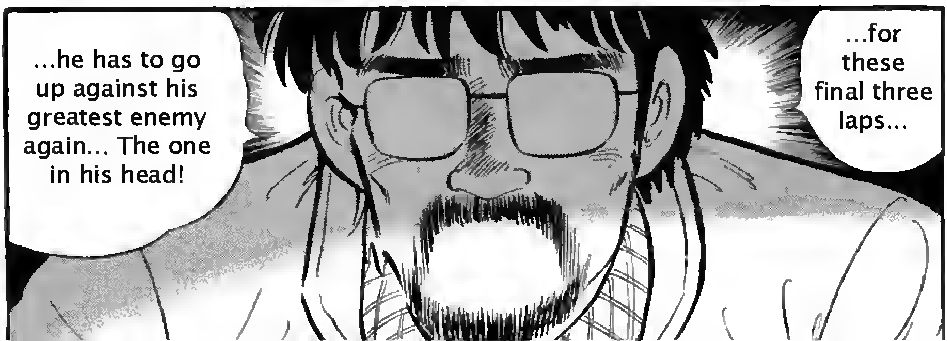

DADUM

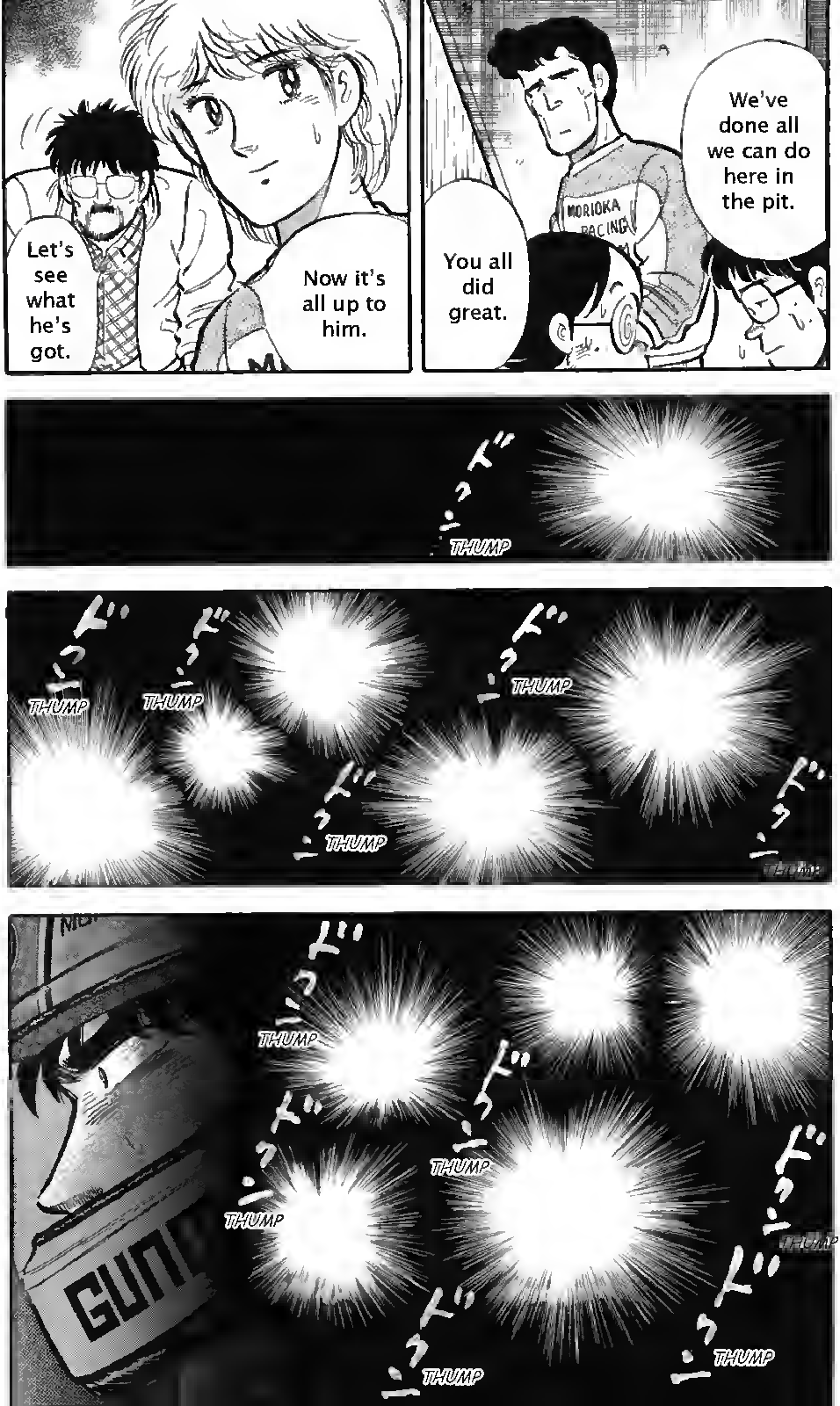
Ta... Tamo-tsu ...
Never thought he could make such a comeback!
He's killing it now!
And it's all thanks to our little Tamotsu doll.
VROOOM
-1
Woohoo! Keep it up, Gunma!
Look at him go! Like some kinda water skeeter!
GUNMA
Uh-oh...
What!?
The rain washed off all the paint!


It's too late to repaint it, isn't it...
I was so foused on the race I didn't notice.
Dam-mit.
This is bad.
GUNMA AKAGI


...
He was on his way to first place.
THUMP
Crap, he's got three laps to go.
GUNMA AKAGI

Now that he figured it out...
Listen up!

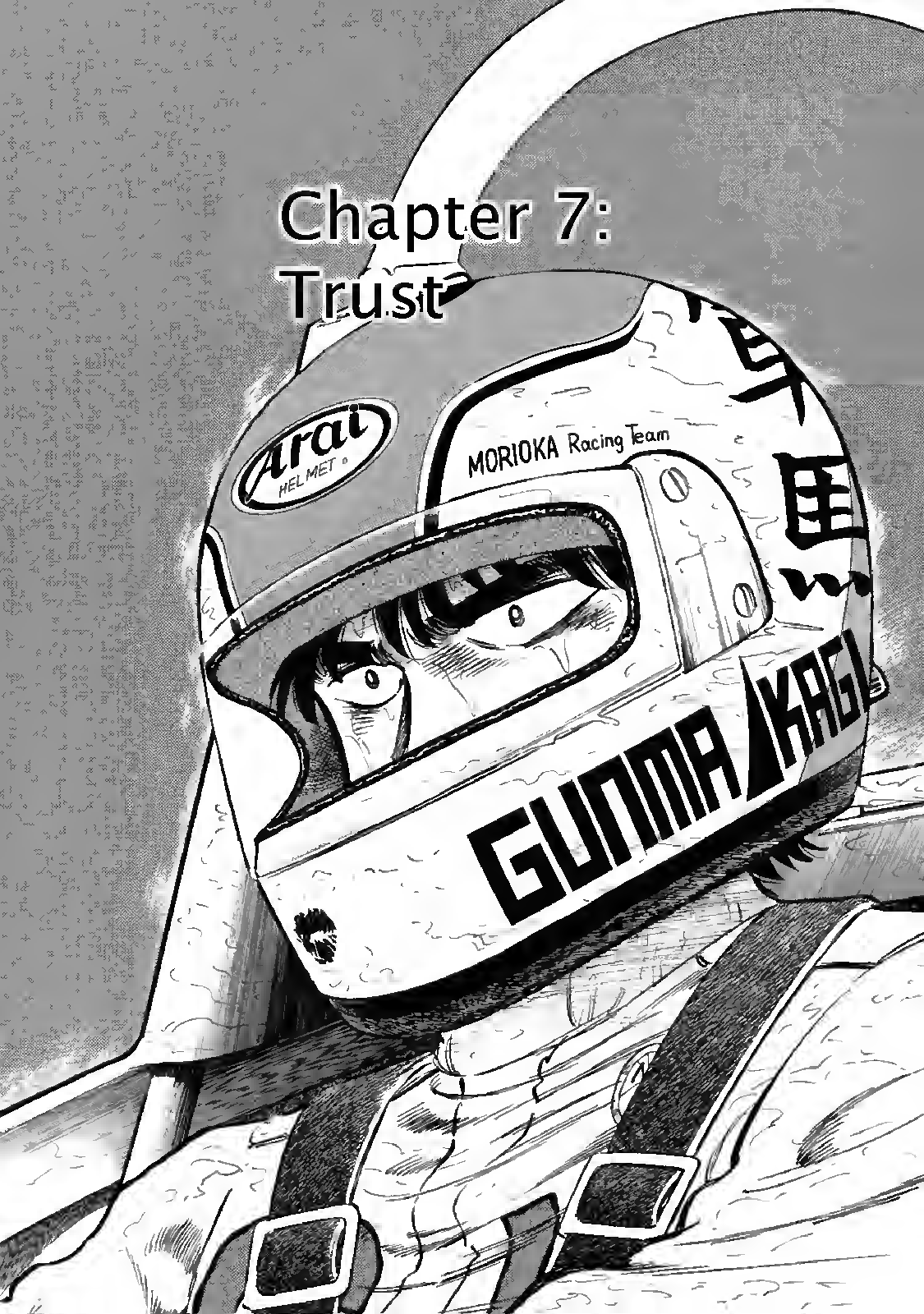

...he has to go up against his greatest enemy again... The one in his head!
...for these final three laps...


Let's see what he's got.
Now it's all up to him.
You all did great.
We've done all we can do here in the pit.
MORIOKA RACING
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
GUN

ドゥン THUMP
ドゥン THUMP
ドゥン THUMP

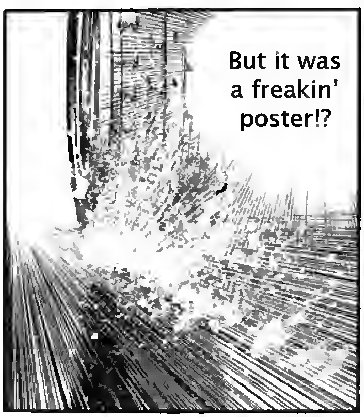
!
The rain's letting up.
DRIP
DRIP
MORIOKA RACING TEAM
That was like a passing Autumn shower! It's hard to believe how such a strong rain could let up so quickly!
Now that the drivers have regained their vision, they're picking up the pace again on the final lap!
NISSAN
VROOH
ZOOOM
ZOOOM
VROOH
ZOOOM

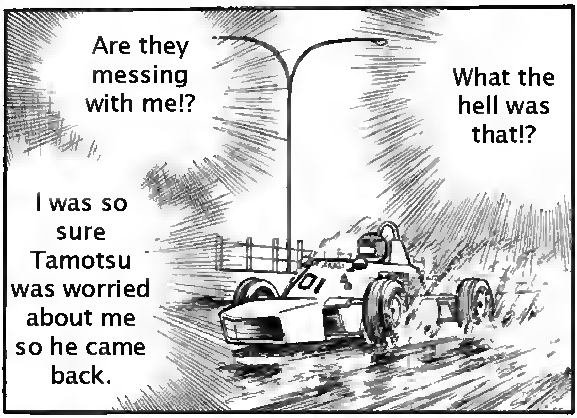
Chapter 7: Trust



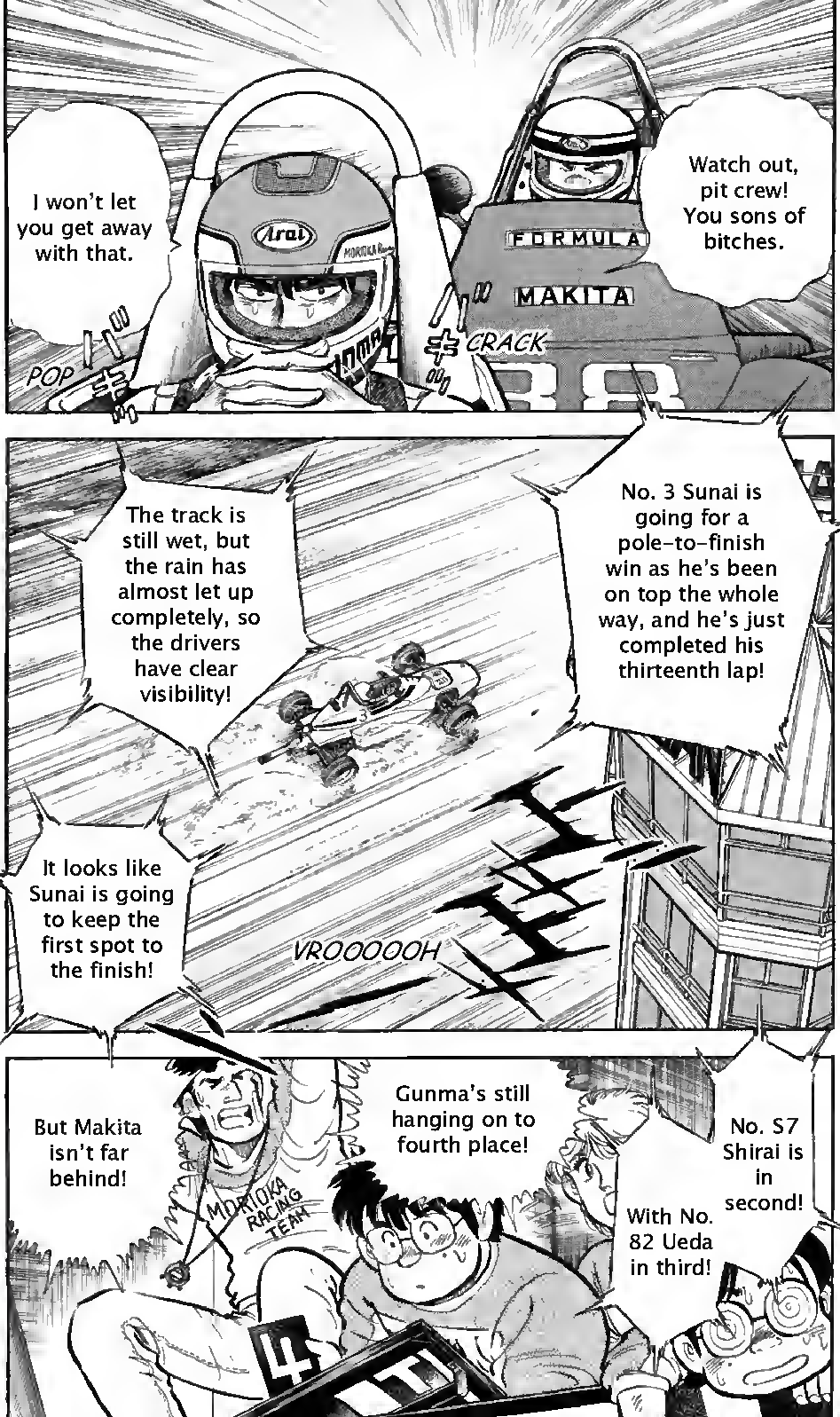
ドゥン THUMP
ドゥン THUMP
ドゥン THUMP
ドゥン THUMP
ドゥン THUMP
ドゥン THUMP
ドゥン THUMP
SHINMA AKAGI
101

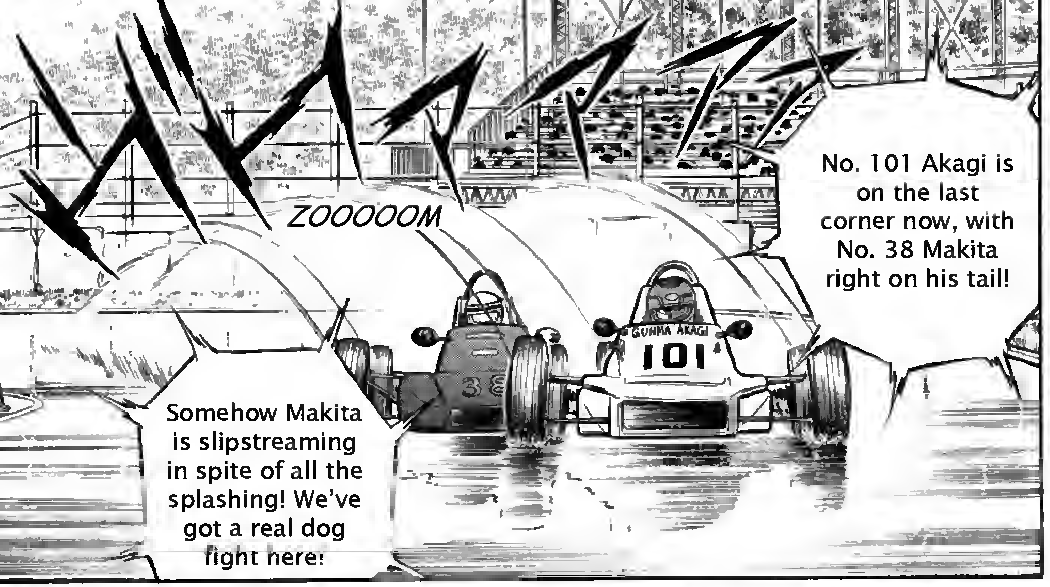
MORIOKA Racing Team
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP


But it was a freakin' poster!?


Are they messing with me!?
What the hell was that!?
I was so sure Tamotsu was worried about me so he came back.
101

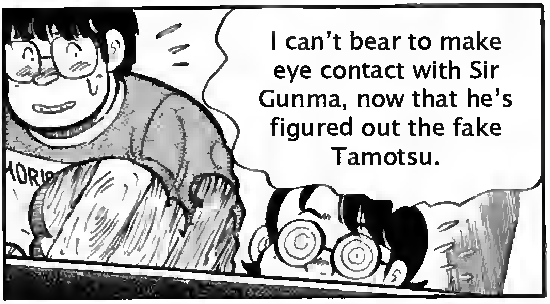
And to think they fooled me with it.
Heh! A poster!
That's real funny! Like somethin' for kids.
I feel like my pride's been shattered!
GLARE

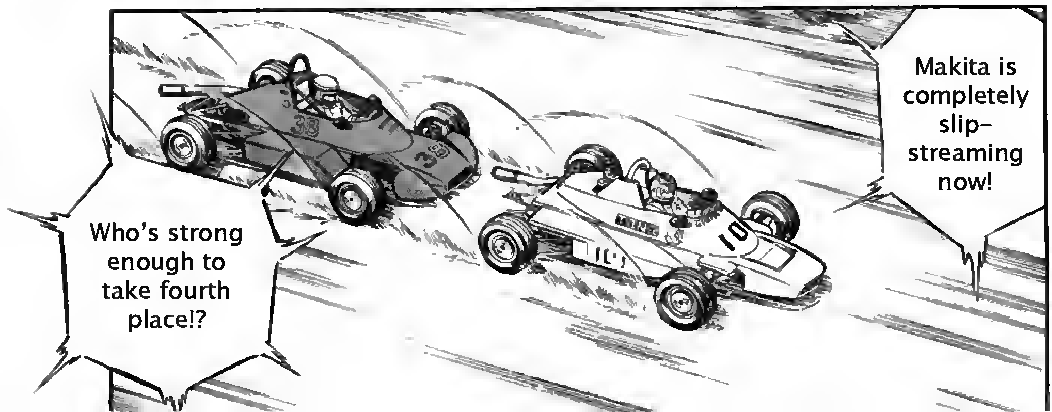

I won't let you get away with that.
Watch out, pit crew! You sons of bitches.
POP
CRACK
FORMULA
MAKITA
Arai
The track is still wet, but the rain has almost let up completely, so the drivers have clear visibility!
No. 3 Sunai is going for a pole-to-finish win as he's been on top the whole way, and he's just completed his thirteenth lap!
It looks like Sunai is going to keep the first spot to the finish!
VROOOOOH
But Makita isn't far behind!
Gunma's still hanging on to fourth place!
No. S7 Shirai is in second!
With No. 82 Ueda in third!
MORIOKA RACING TEAM
4


ZOOOOOM
GUNMA AKAGI
101
No. 101 Akagi is on the last corner now, with No. 38 Makita right on his tail!
Somehow Makita is slipstreaming in spite of all the splashing! We've got a real dog fight here!

Aral
Aral
MORIOKA Racing Team

He's coming!
MORIOKA RACING TEAM

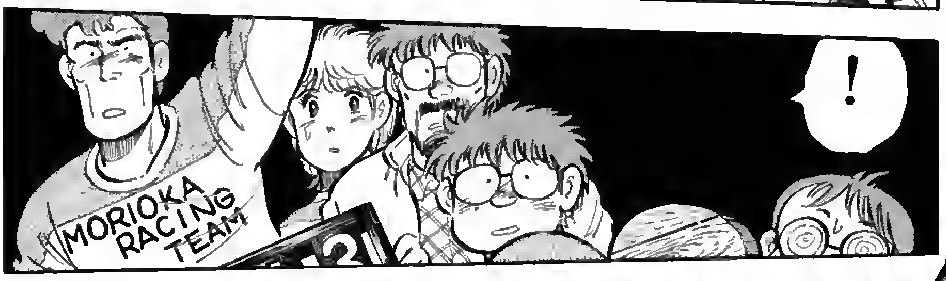

I can't bear to make eye contact with Sir Gunma, now that he's figured out the fake Tamotsu.

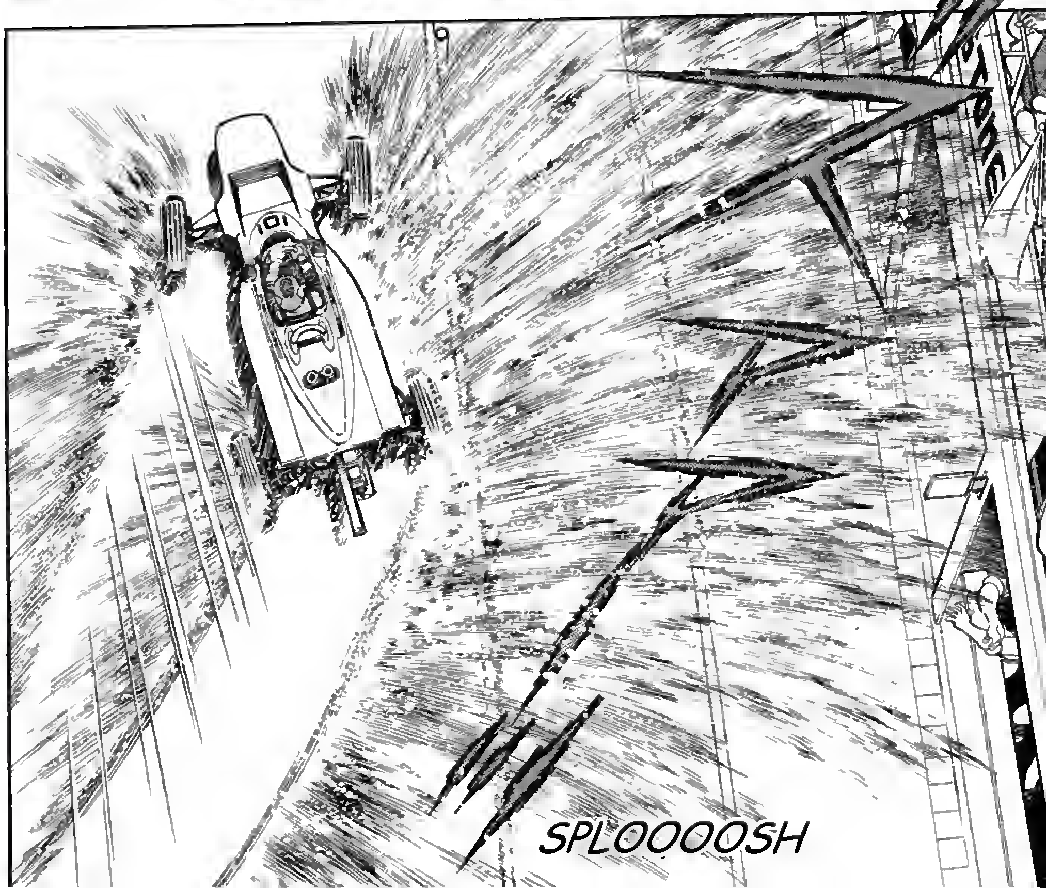

Makita is completely slip-streaming now!
Who's strong enough to take fourth place!?

It looks like Akagi doesn't want him slipstreaming, so he's switched to the inside!
But he'll lose time for that!
He's gone too far in! At this rate he's going to smash into the guard rail!

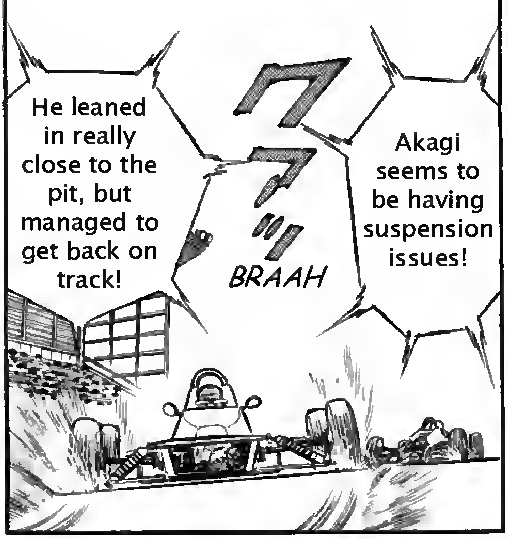
SPLISH
38
10
GUNMA
AKAGI
VRAAAH
38
GUNMA
10
Look out!
GUN
AKAG

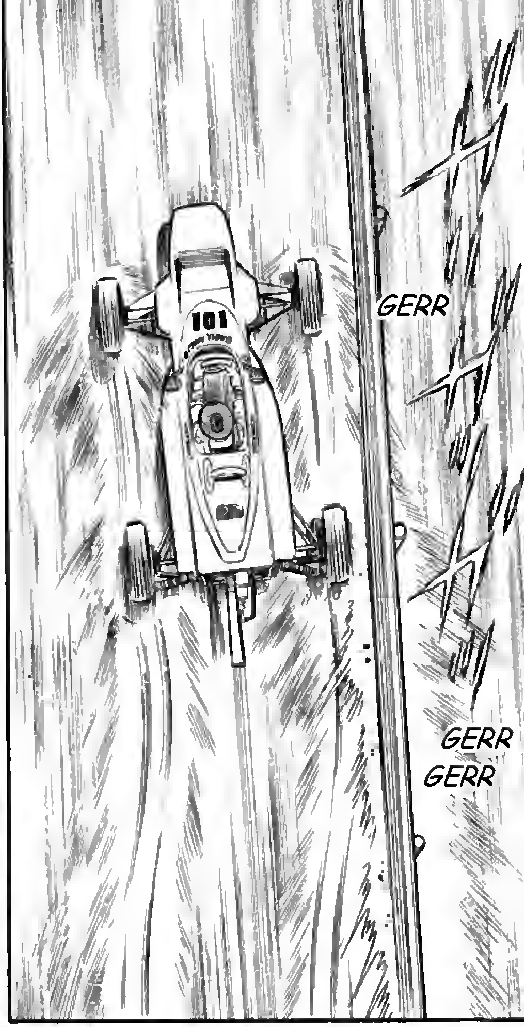
Arai
Suck on this!

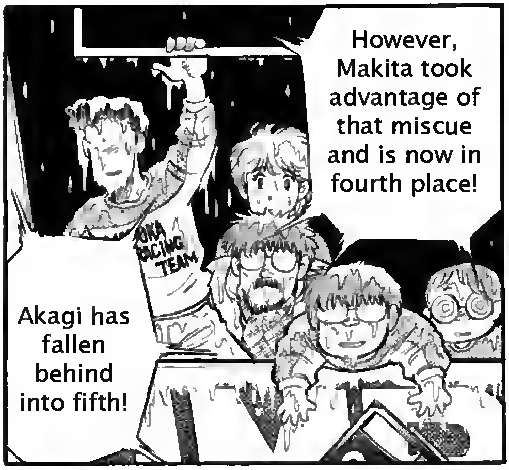

!
MORIOKA RACING TEAM


101
SPLOOOOSH

POSHHHH
GUNMA AKAGI
GUNMA AKAGI
GUNMA AKAGI

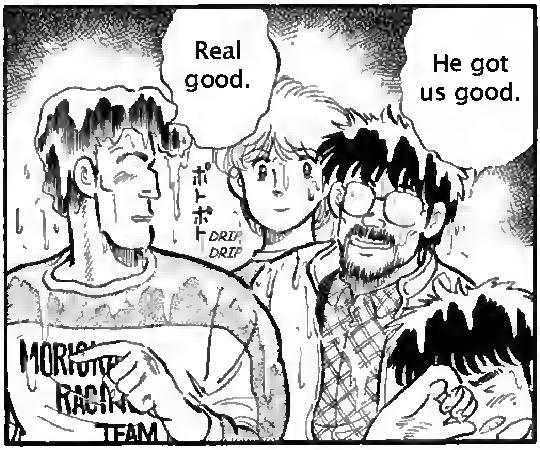

He leaned in really close to the pit, but managed to get back on track!
BRAAH
Akagi seems to be having suspension issues!


101
GERR
GERR
GERR

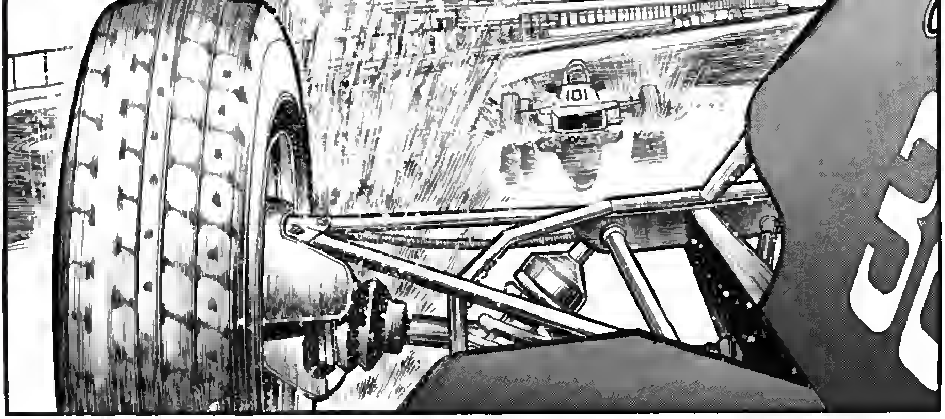

However, Makita took advantage of that miscue and is now in fourth place!
Akagi has fallen behind into fifth!

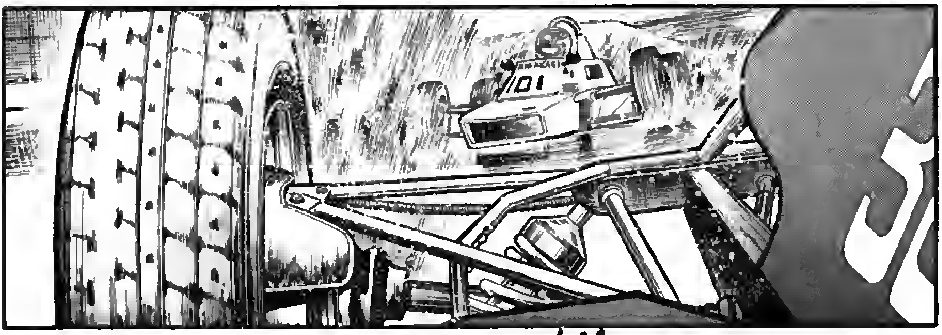
What is that idiot thinking!?

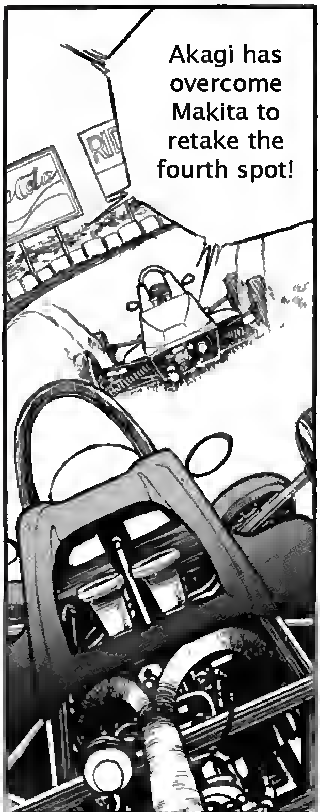
Geez ...

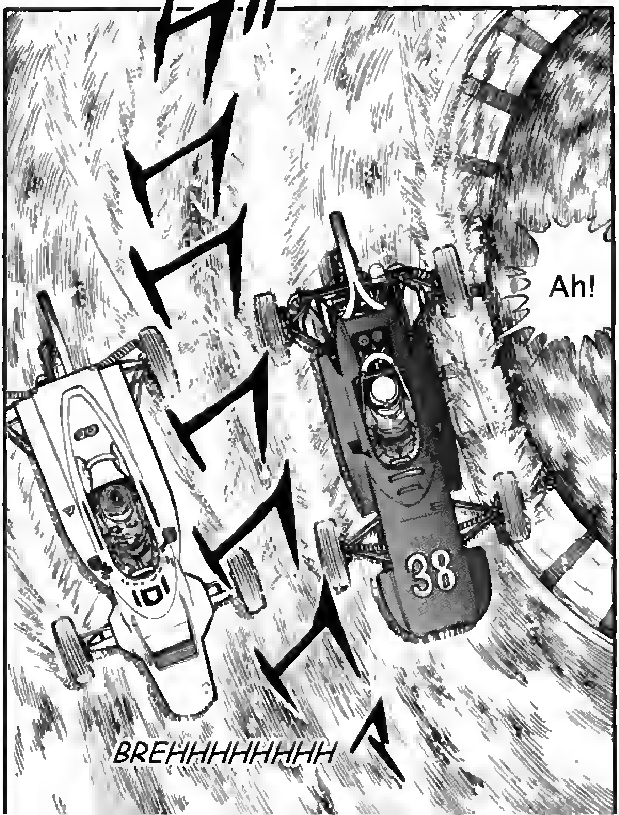

Real good.
He got us good.
ポトポト
DRIP DRIP
TEAM

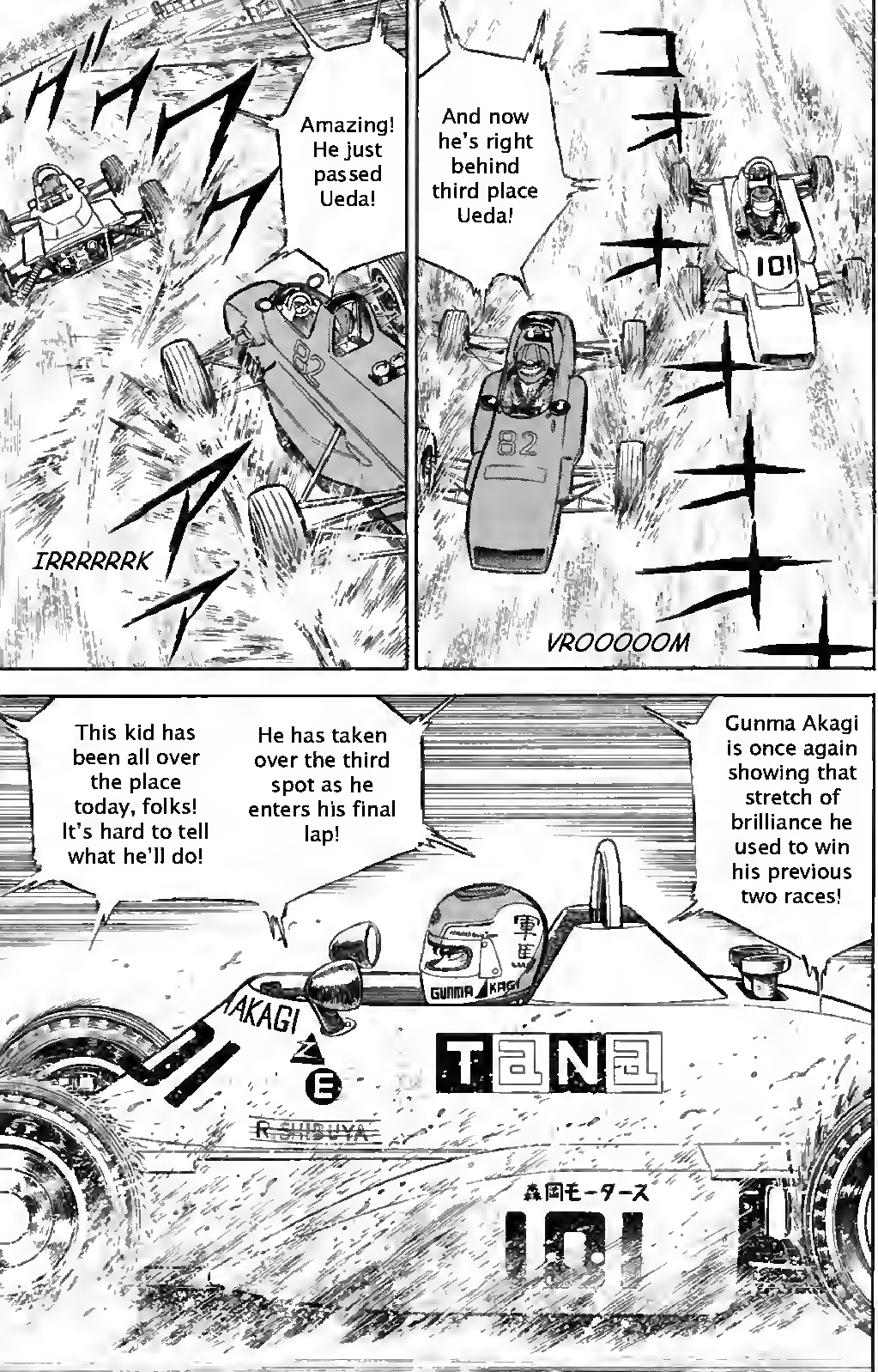
Now you know what happens when you screw with me!
Serves them right!
SWIP
SWIP
Heh! Heh heh!
GUNMA AKAGI
That felt good.
Ahh...
Time to move!
VROOOOOOM

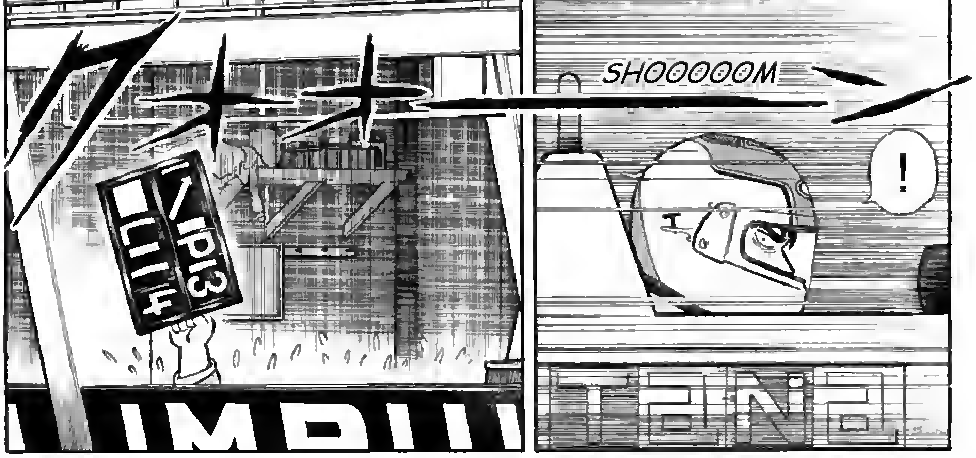

101

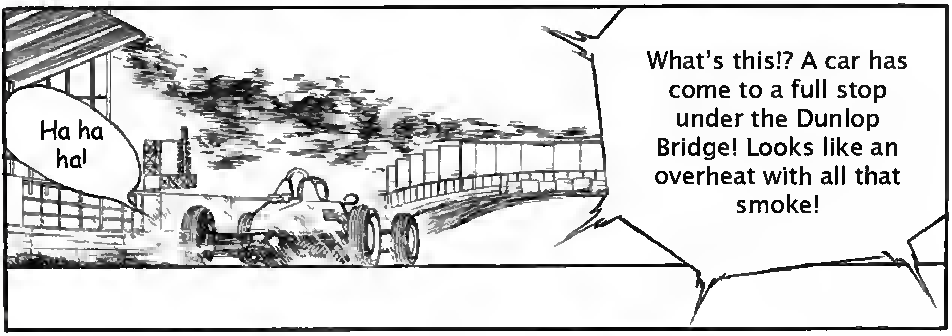

101


Akagi has overcome Makita to retake the fourth spot!

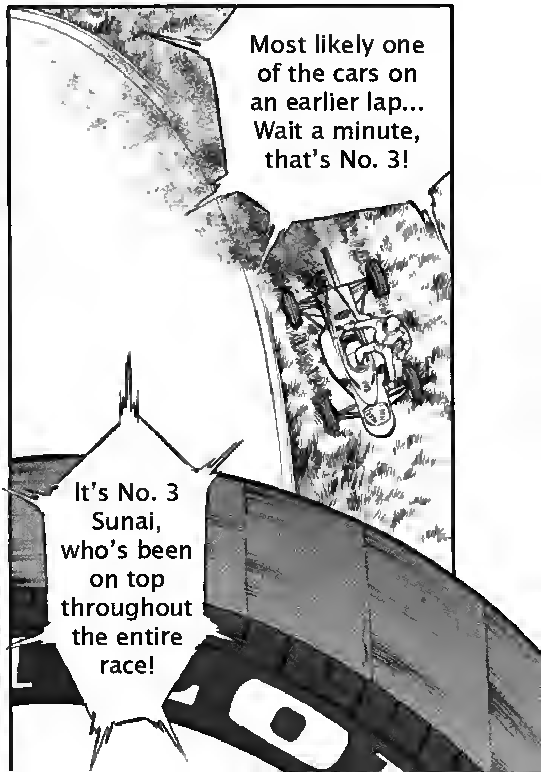

Ah!
38
101
BREHHHHHHHH


Amazing! He just passed Ueda!
IRRRRRRK
And now he's right behind third place Ueda!
VROOOOOM
This kid has been all over the place today, folks! It's hard to tell what he'll do!
He has taken over the third spot as he enters his final lap!
Gunma Akagi is once again showing that stretch of brilliance he used to win his previous two races!
AKAGI
GUNMA KAGI
TANA
R SHIBUYA
森岡モータース
101

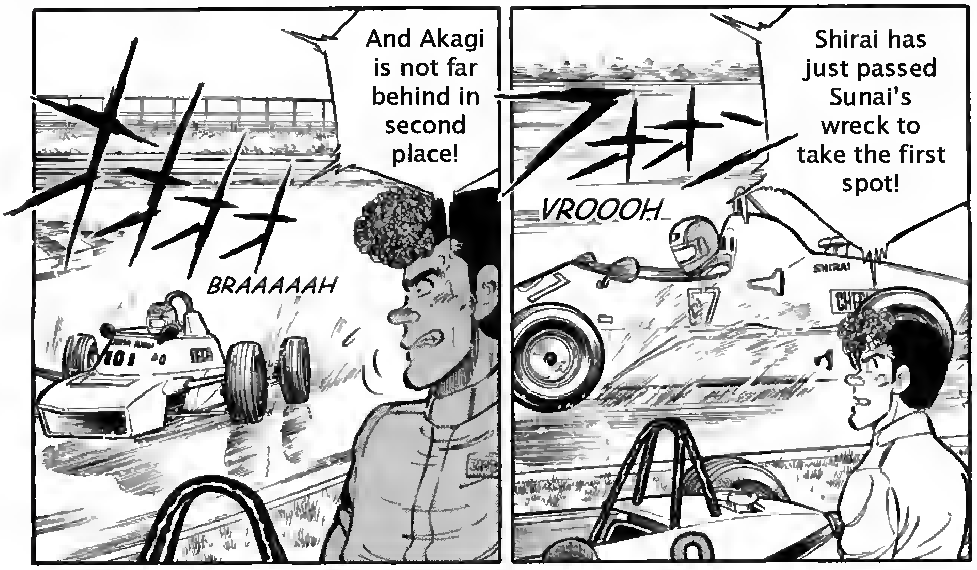

SHOOOOOM
!

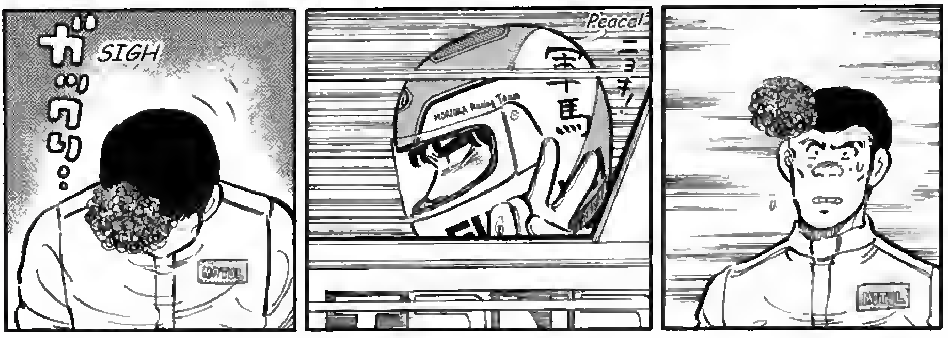

Ha ha ha!
What's this!? A car has come to a full stop under the Dunlop Bridge! Looks like an overheat with all that smoke!

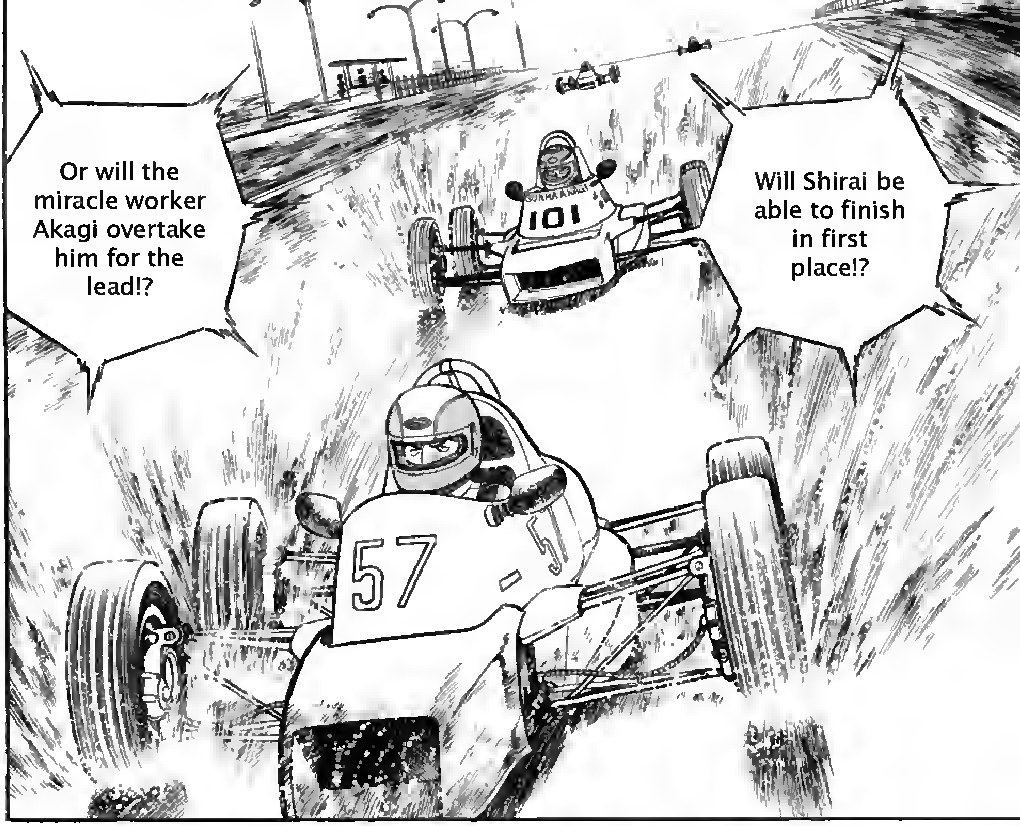
What an unfortunate turn of events for Sunai! He's out of the race on his final lap!
No freaking way!

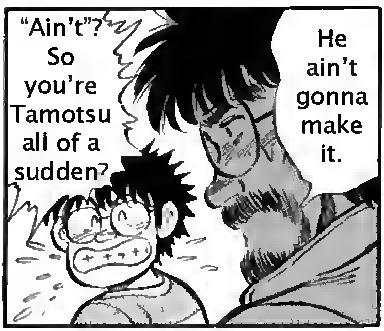

Most likely one of the cars on an earlier lap... Wait a minute, that's No. 3!
It's No. 3 Sunai, who's been on top throughout the entire race!

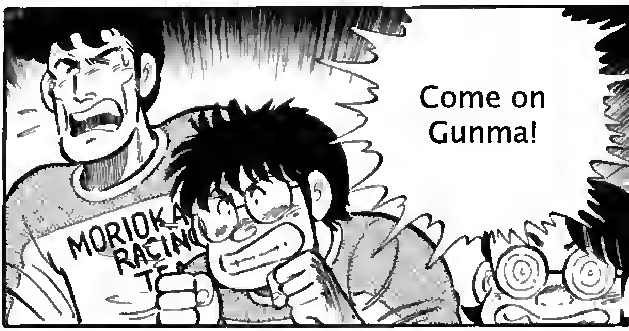
Sweet! Now Gunma can go for the win!
WHOA
He said Sunai is out of the race!
MORIOKA RACING TEAM

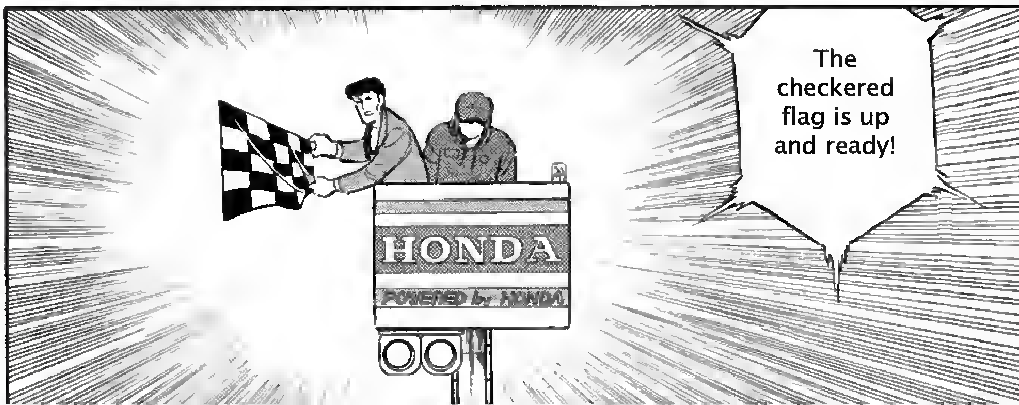

And Akagi is not far behind in second place!
BRAAAAAH
Shirai has just passed Sunai's wreck to take the first spot!
VROOOH


SIGH
Peace!

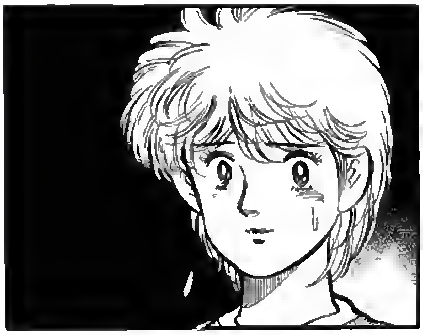

Or will the miracle worker Akagi overtake him for the lead!?
Will Shirai be able to finish in first place!?
101
57


"Ain't"? So you're Tamotsu all of a sudden?
He ain't gonna make it.


Come on Gunma!
MORIOKA RACING

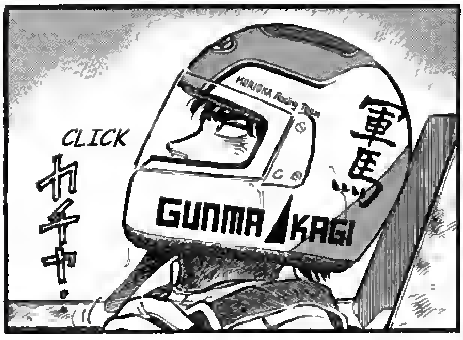

The checkered flag is up and ready!
HONDA
POWERED by HONDA

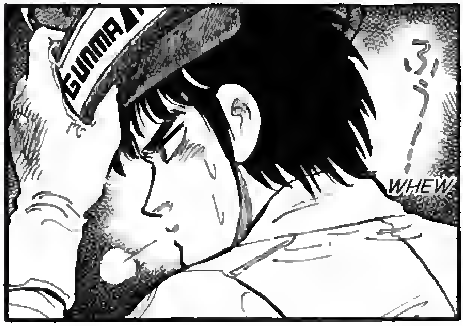
No. 57 Shirai has passed the checkered flag first to claim victory!
BRRVRRR
With No. 101 Akagi coming in at a close second!
Winner!
BRAAAAAAH
101
57
VROOOOH
...
MORIOKA RACING TEAM
I can't stand it!
Geez, he was so close!
POUND

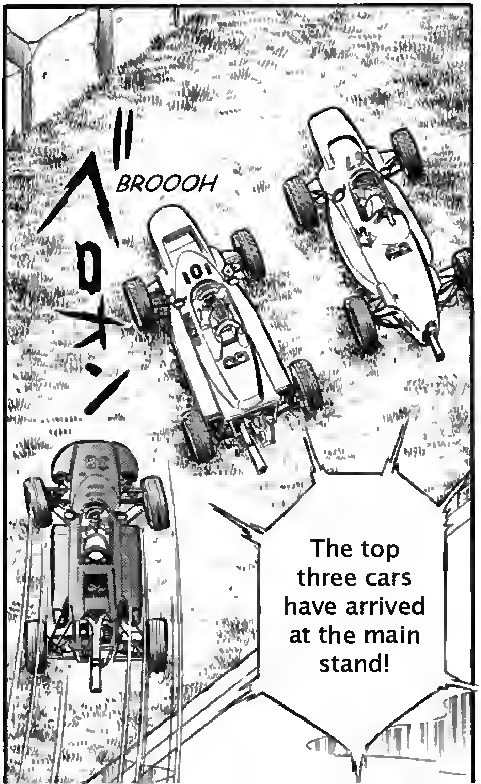


Stupid
...
Sigh
...

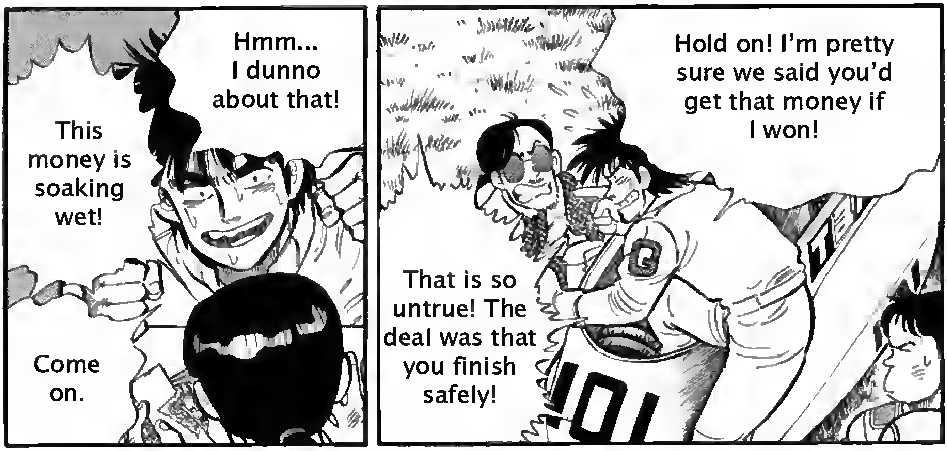
That's what happens when you lose focus.
If he wouldn't have taken the time to drench us with water, he would have won.

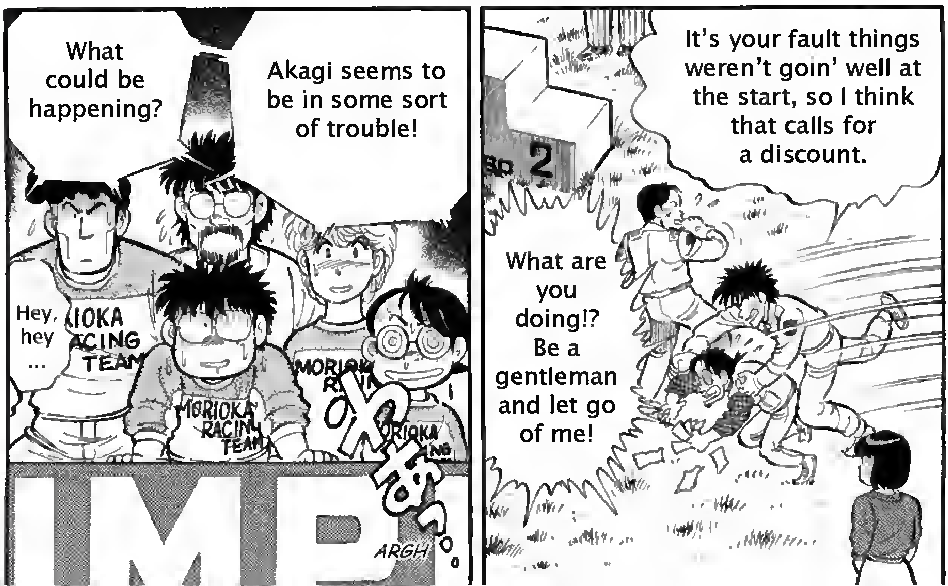

CLICK
カチャ
GUNMA KAGI
軍馬


GUNMA
ふぅ!
WHEW


BROOOH
The top three cars have arrived at the main stand!

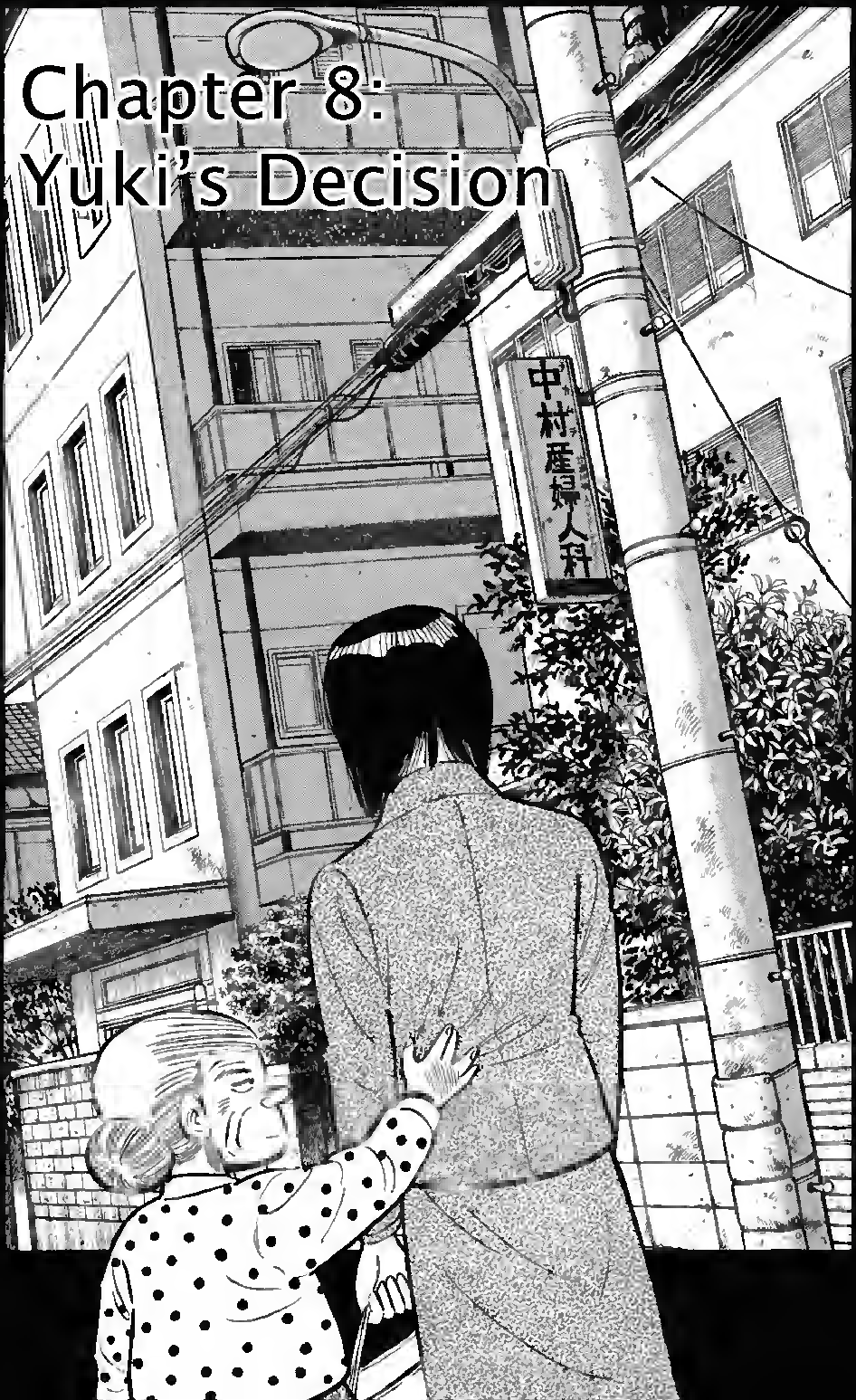
Hey!
My precious money!
SWOOF
DASH


Hmm... I dunno about that!
This money is soaking wet!
Come on.
Hold on! I'm pretty sure we said you'd get that money if I won!
That is so untrue! The deal was that you finish safely!


What could be happening?
Akagi seems to be in some sort of trouble!
Hey, hey ...
MORIOKA RACING TEAM
ARGH
It's your fault things weren't goin' well at the start, so I think that calls for a discount.
What are you doing!? Be a gentleman and let go of me!

HA HA HA
Check that out! They're fighting over money!
SMACK BIFF SOCK
Stop it!
Take this!
GUNMA AKAGI
Oh no! Stop him!
How embarrassing
SHOOP
HA HA HA
Racing isn't cheap, after all.
What a show!
Since Hijiri moved up to F3, apparently this Akagi kid wants to move up too!
HA HA HA
Driving F3 takes a lot of money, but no team's gonna hire a thug like him.
Pretty sad.
HA HA HA HA
HEH HEH

Chapter 8: Yuki's Decision



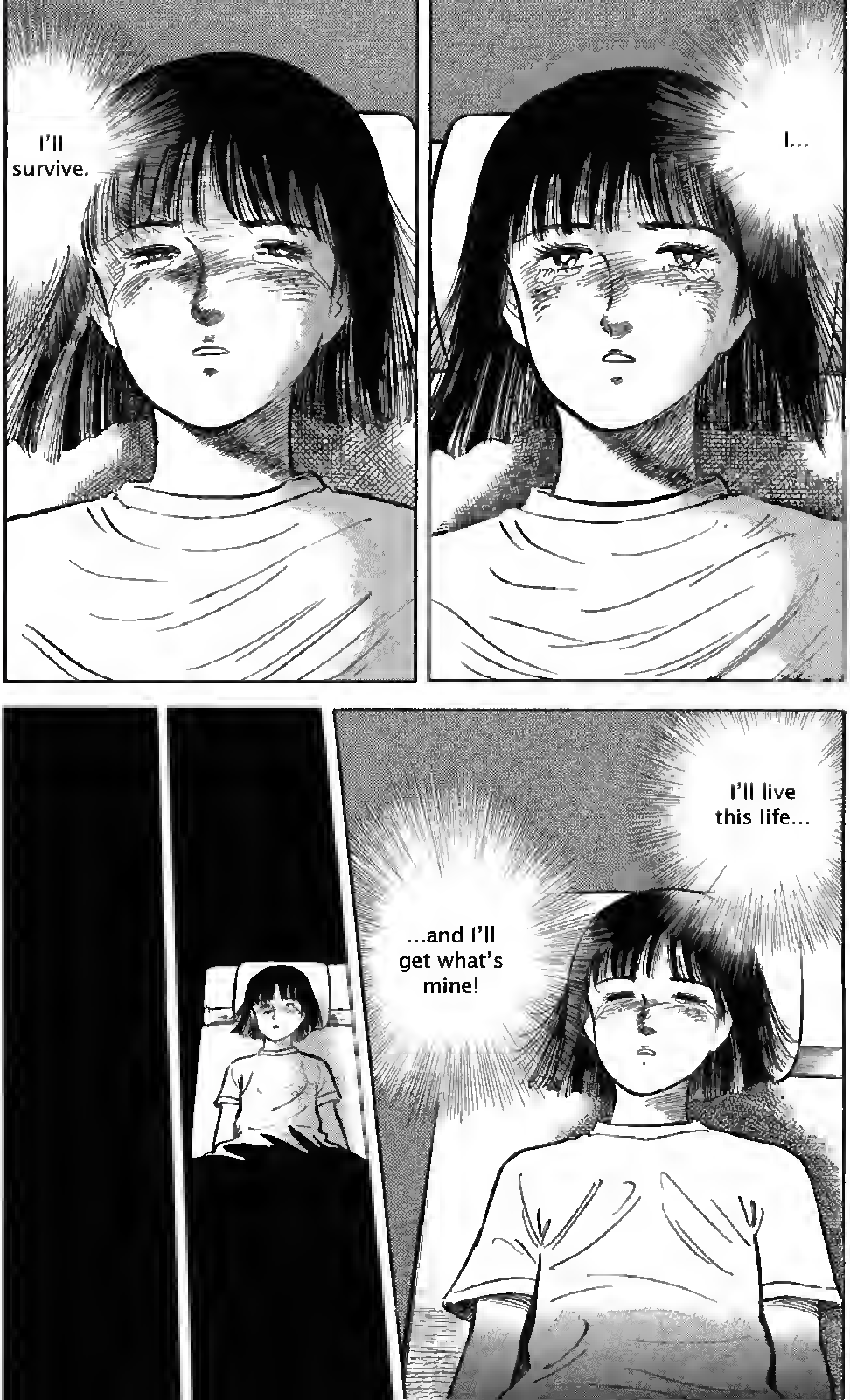
It wasn't easy.
Nakamura OB/GYNDr Shigeo NakamuraHours 9:00 am - 5:00 pm Closed on Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays
中村産婦人科
院長 中村重雄
診療時間 AM 9:00～PM 5:00
休診日 土日曜日 祭日
Not a horse race, but a car race.
TOSS
I didn't think she'd take no for an answer, so I took her.
CRUNCH
Yes, she's in the waiting room now.
CRUNCH CRUNCH
Bringing her all the way over here was exhausting.
All of a sudden, she said she wanted to see a race!
Can't believe that Gunma...
TAP TAP
SHAKE SHAKE SHAKE
Be sure to let the Mrs. know, okay...? Bye-bye.
She's about to have the operation now, so we'll be back tonight.
CLICK

KACHUK
カチャ
Just do what Master Shoma says, and he'll take good care of you.
That's the smart way to live. You may lose some freedom, but you'll just have to deal with it.
Don't worry. It'll be over before you know it.
PICK
Come in.
Oh, come on. You'll be able to get pregnant again right away, as young as you are.
This is a very important time for Master Shoma, so we can't burden him with extra worries.
TWITCH

Gunma!
Yuki!
Come with me, Yuki!
That Akagi kid wants to race F3!
Check that out! They're fighting over money! Ha ha ha!
Pretty sad. He doesn't have the money for F3.
Have you forgotten all we've done for you? That's not like you.
What has gotten into you, Yuki!?
This is a very important time for me, Yuki.
I have to succeed my father as head of Akagi Group.
So I don't have time for your selfish demands.
Master Akagi was kind enough to let us raise you, since you didn't have any parents...
...so please don't cause us trouble.
Please Yuki, stop acting childish and do what I say.

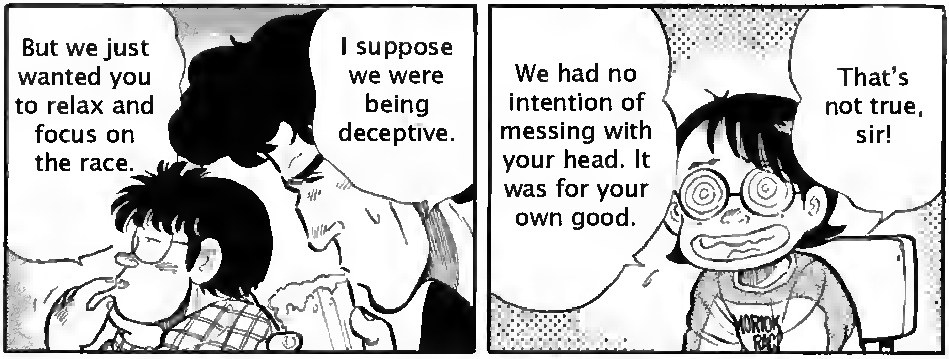
This is a very important time for me, Yuki.
What has gotten into you, Yuki!?
Have you forgotten all we've done for you? That's not like you.
I have to succeed my father as head of Akagi Group.
So I don't have time for your selfish demands.
Master Akagi was kind enough to let us raise you, since you didn't have any parents...
...so please don't cause us trouble.
Please Yuki, stop acting childish and do what I say.

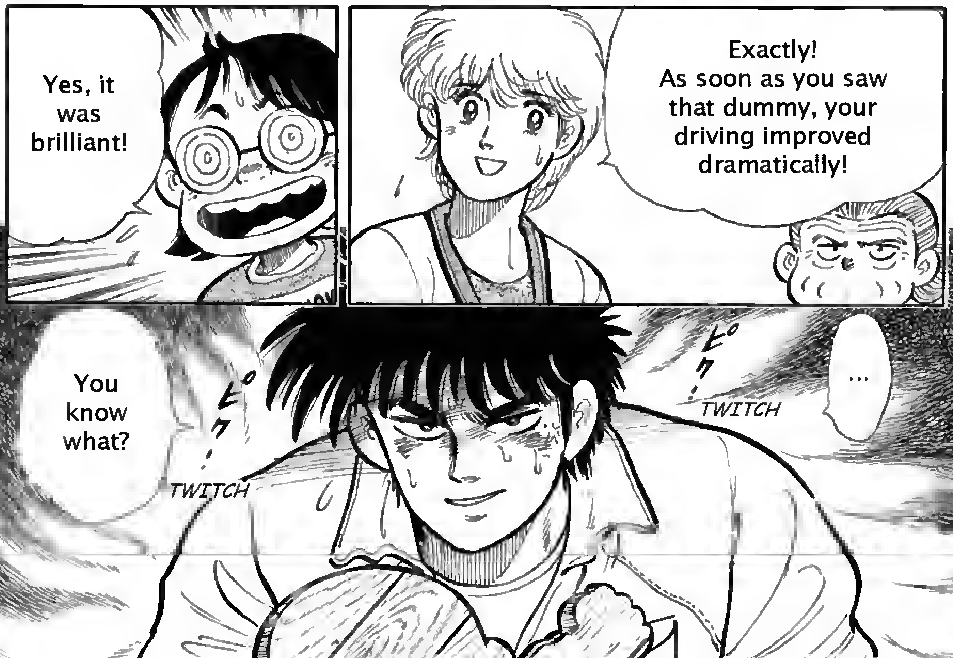
Gunma!
Yuki!
Come with me, Yuki!
That Akagi kid wants to race F3!
Check that out! They're fighting over money! Ha ha ha!
Pretty sad. He doesn't have the money for F3.


I'll survive.
I...
I'll live this life...
...and I'll get what's mine!

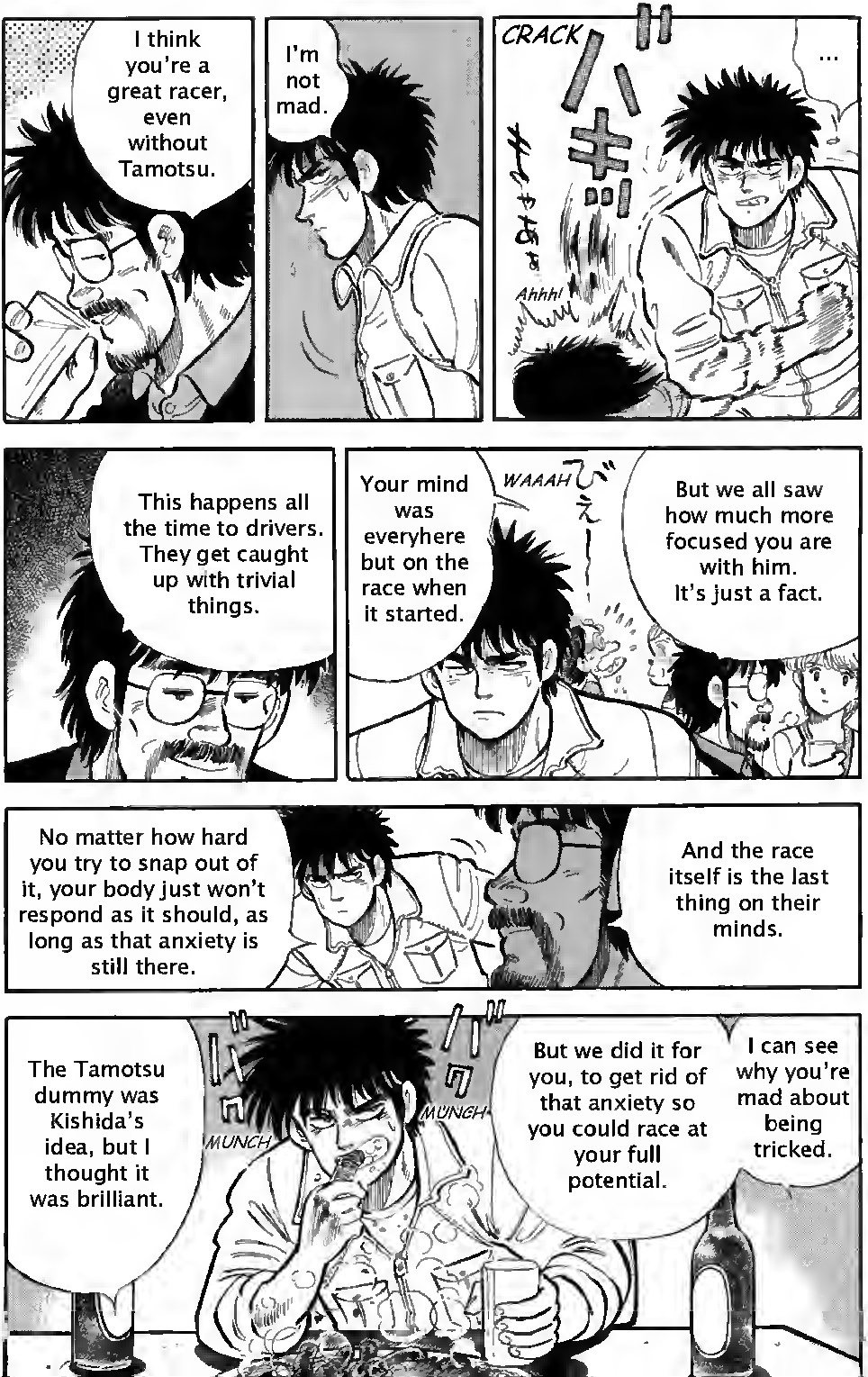
What's wrong?
Huh?
ボキ
BLANK
Cheers!
First place just barely got away from you, but it was a heck of a race. Here's to your miraculous second place run!
...s.
...r...
...e...
...e...
Ch
Gunma! What did you do this time!?
んだよぉー
GEEZ
Huh?

It was these guys! They made this fake Tamotsu dummy to mess with my head!
I didn't do nothin'!


But we just wanted you to relax and focus on the race.
I suppose we were being deceptive.
We had no intention of messing with your head. It was for your own good.
That's not true, sir!


Yes, it was brilliant!
Exactly! As soon as you saw that dummy, your driving improved dramatically!
You know what?
TWITCH
TWITCH
...

You are a very emotional, unstable person. And I witnessed with my own eyes how desperately you need Tamotsu.
That's not true, sir!
...I really don't give a damn!
Whether Tamotsu is here or not...
CRACK
CLATTER
Shut the hell up, Kishida! You little rat!
Why get so mad, Gunma?
Kishida's just being straight with you.
People like you oughta be...
POUND POUND
Ouch! You're hurting me sir!
Calm down.
WOOSH
TWITCH


I think you're a great racer, even without Tamotsu.
I'm not mad.
CRACK
...
Ahhh!
This happens all the time to drivers. They get caught up with trivial things.
Your mind was everyhere but on the race when it started.
WAAAH
But we all saw how much more focused you are with him. It's just a fact.
No matter how hard you try to snap out of it, your body just won't respond as it should, as long as that anxiety is still there.
And the race itself is the last thing on their minds.
The Tamotsu dummy was Kishida's idea, but I thought it was brilliant.
MUNCH
MUNCH
But we did it for you, to get rid of that anxiety so you could race at your full potential.
I can see why you're mad about being tricked.

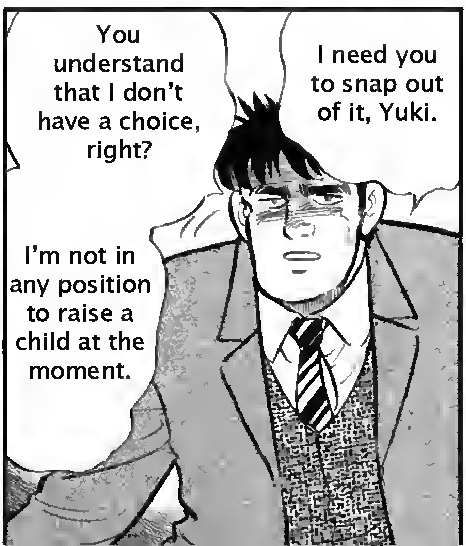
But the problem came after that.
CRUNCH
That was an incredible run you had, especially in the rain.
In fact, we saw the results immediately.
PEACE!
CRUNCH
Yeah, you would have gotten first place if you just stayed focused! Sunai was out of the race!
If you had just held on to that focus and remarkable driving...
You idiot.
...you would have won the race!
That's right. If you hadn't wasted time to spray water on us in the pit...

SPLASH
I know you were mad at us for tricking you.
And I can understand why you would want to get us in the pit for using that Tamotsu dummy.
But you should have waited after the race to deal with that.
AHH
Just like we're discussing it right now.
Expressing our feelings to each other.
Communicating like this is a way to bring us closer together.
ROLL
ROLL
TUNK
TUNK
TUNK
TUNK
And Gunma...
...answer me this...

...!?
...alone?
Are you racing...
Are you racing alone?
Think about it, Gunma.
...

GLANCE

Okay, Yuki?
But I'm doing as much as I can.
Try to see things from my perspective.


You understand that I don't have a choice, right?
I need you to snap out of it, Yuki.
I'm not in any position to raise a child at the moment.

You're fine with it now, right Yuki?
If you can forgive me, I won't say a word.
Can't you stop talking for once?
I'm in pain from the operation!
That smug, overbearing attitude you put on in public fits you much better.
When you talk to me like a pleading child, it makes me sick.
You make me sick.
Look at you, like a little boy.
You know I can't live without you. I have a soft spot for you.
Don't treat me like this.
Please don't hate me.

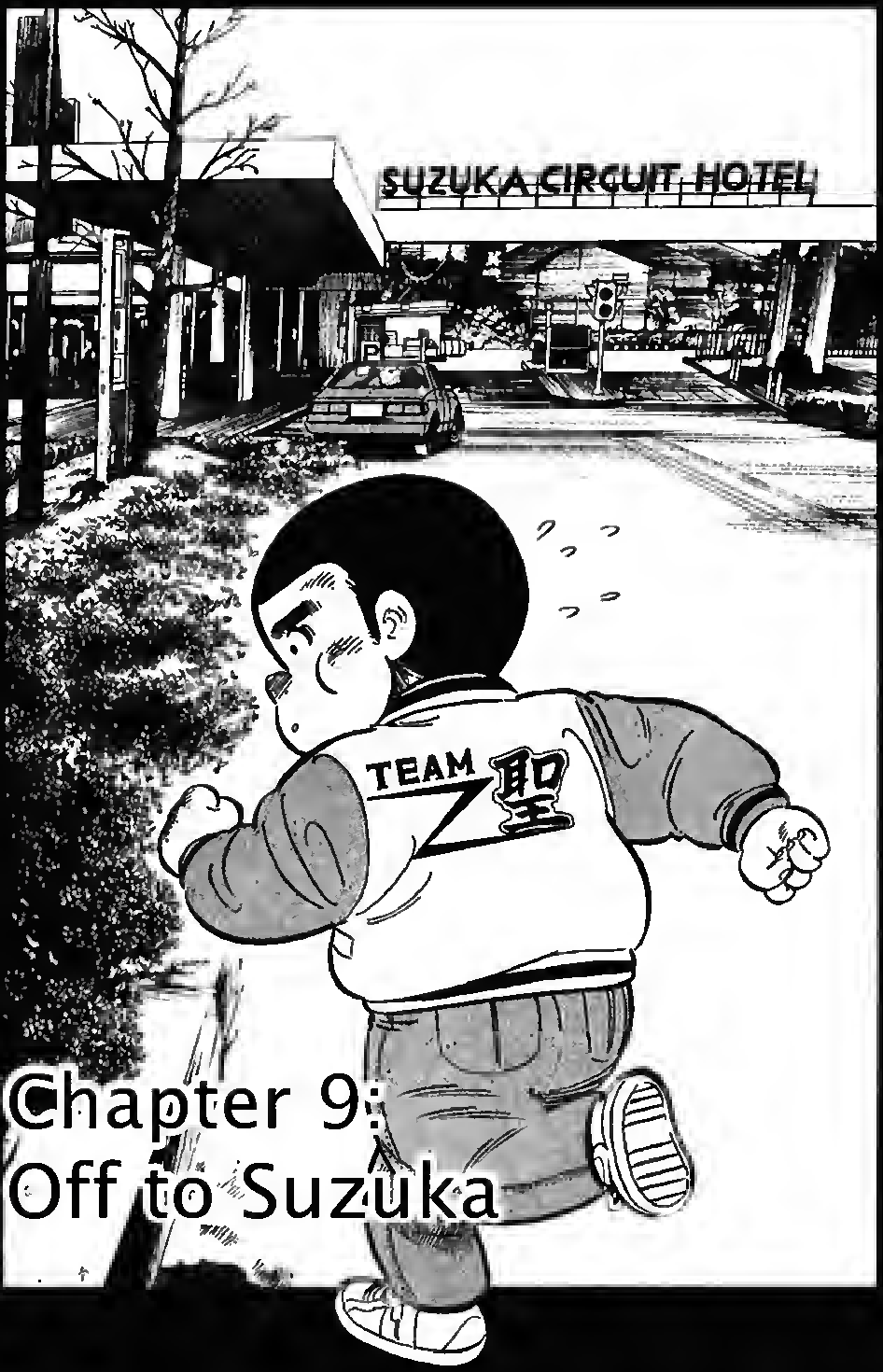
Otherwise, I can't forgive you.
I want ... ...a lot more money.
You forgive me, don't you Yuki!
Then you'll forgive me?
Money is not an issue. I'll make sure you live like a queen!
Oh Yuki!
Thank you so much!
Of course, Yuki.

I'm going to .....help you race!
Gunma ...

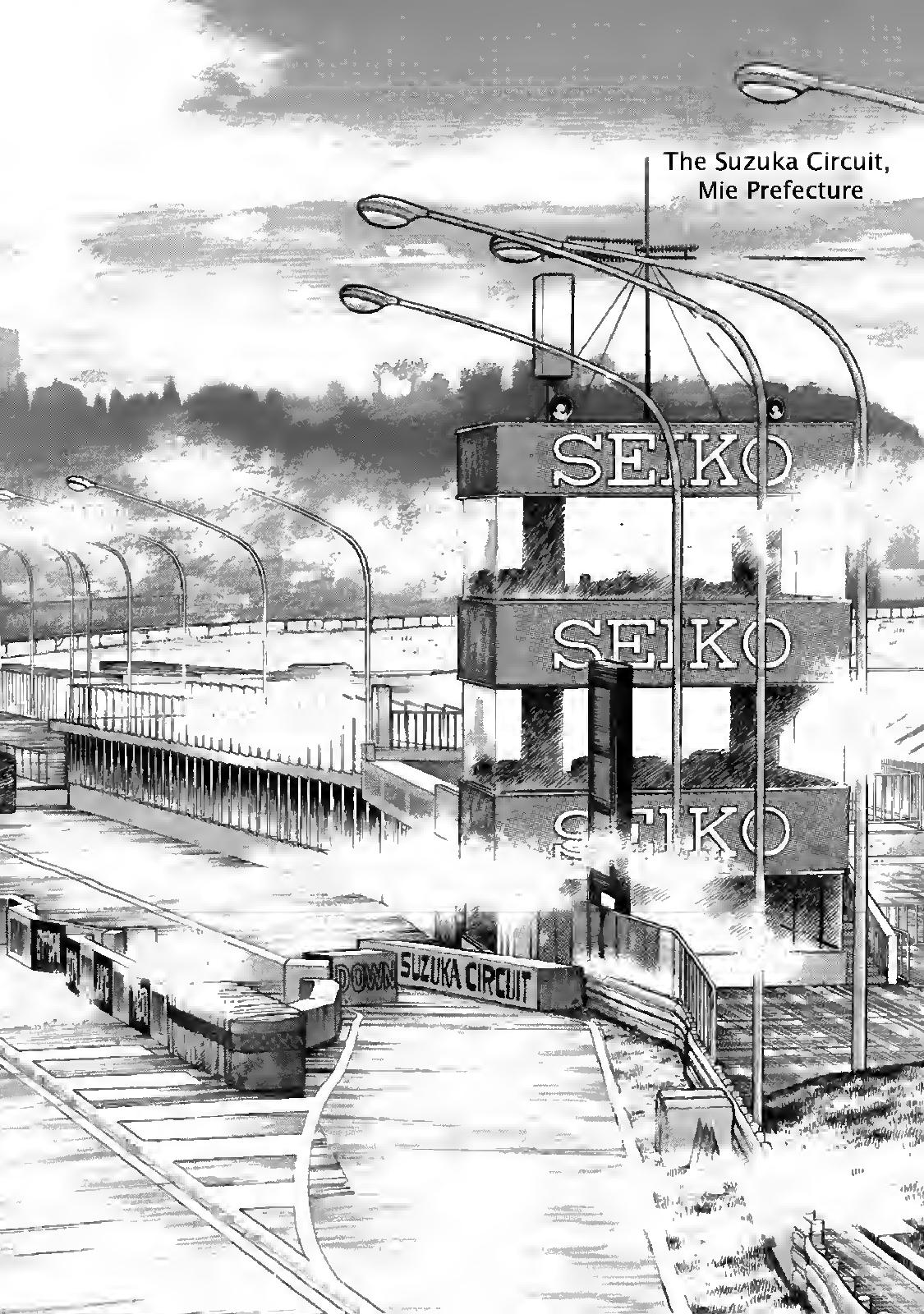
He's deep in thought.
Look at that serious face.
Yes, Gunma. It's good to put on your thinking cap every now and again!

CHIRP
CHIRP
CHIRP
CHIRP
CHIRP

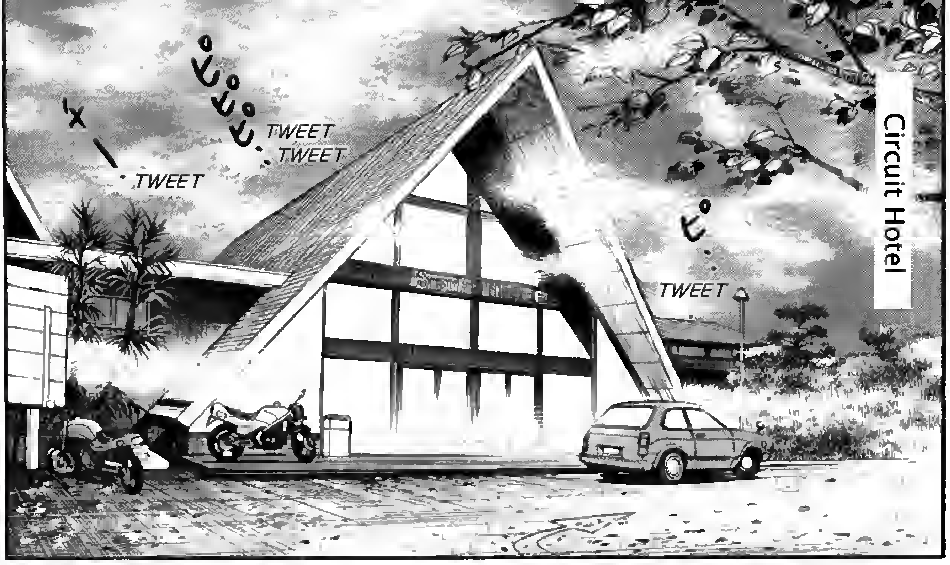
VOL. 5



Chapter 9: Off to Suzuka

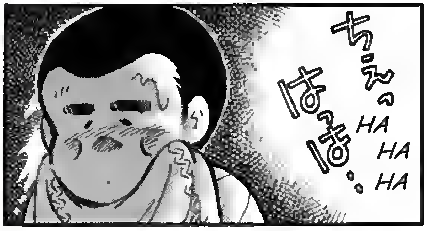


The Suzuka Circuit,
Mie Prefecture



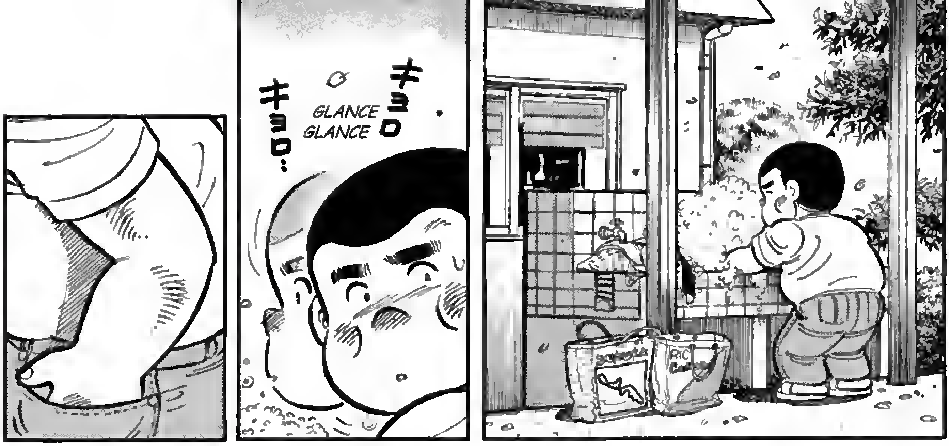
Suzuka Village F

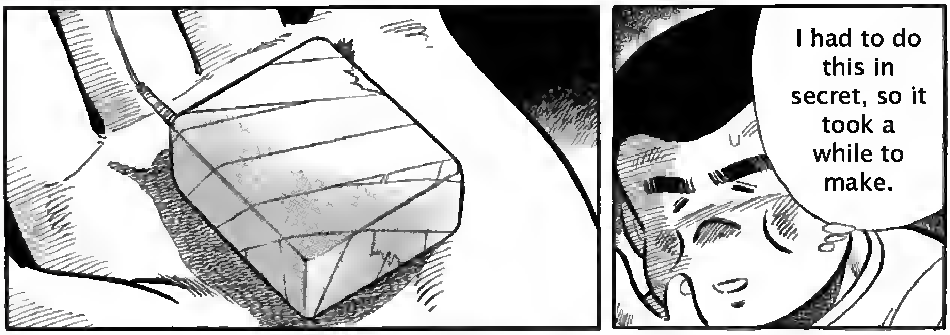
Yeah, he's living the good life while I'm crammed in here with seven other guys!
Hijiri's living it up. It's just him and Ruiko in their own room.

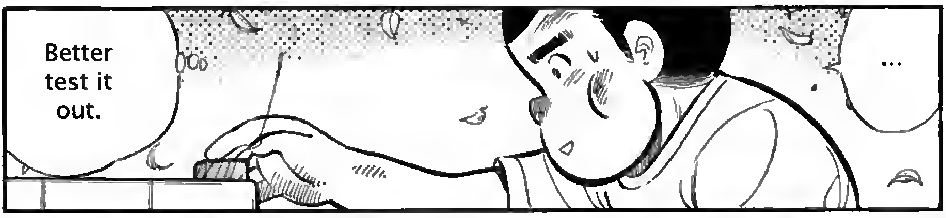


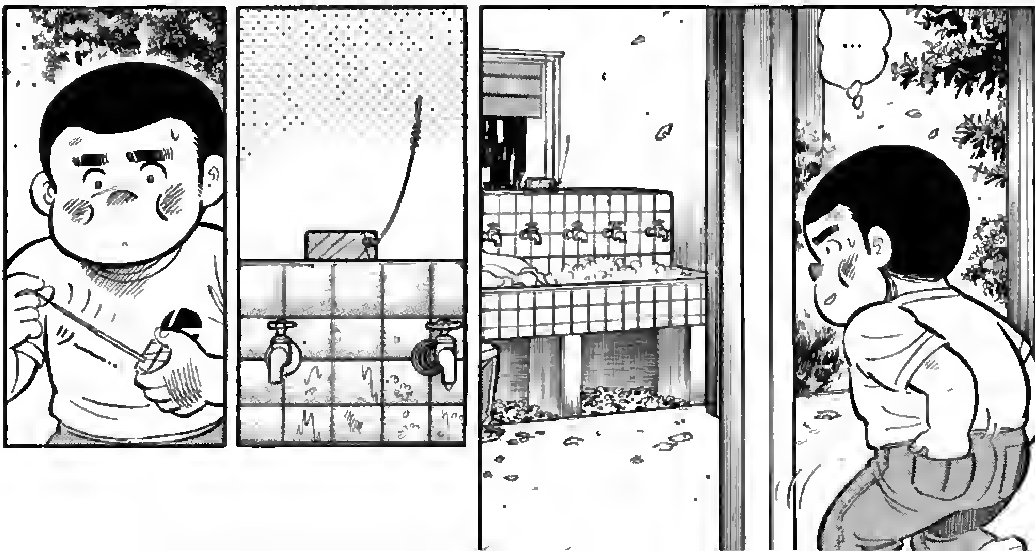
No whining, little man!
This is too much.
Damn straight!
That goes for me, too.
Take care of my laundry, Tamotsu.
Let's go grab something to eat.
SLUNK
Mine too.
Got it.
...
...but to us you're just a rookie, got it!?
KACHUK
I'm not sure what Hijiri saw in you...
TEAM
...
SLAM
Good. Then wash our dirty laundry, and no more complaining!
TUNK
TUNK
TUNK
Can you believe this guy? I've been in the team for three years brown nosing Hijiri!
Quit complaining.
HA
HA
HA

Yeah.
TWEET
TWEET
Do you have practice time...
... today?
CHEEP
CHEEP
CHEEP
I'm sure he's fine.
I wonder how Tamotsu's getting along with the others.
Yeah, it's nothing.
Are you okay?
!
Rrgh.
...
All right?
Sleep with Tamotsu every now and then.


キョロ
GLANCE
GLANCE
キョロ:

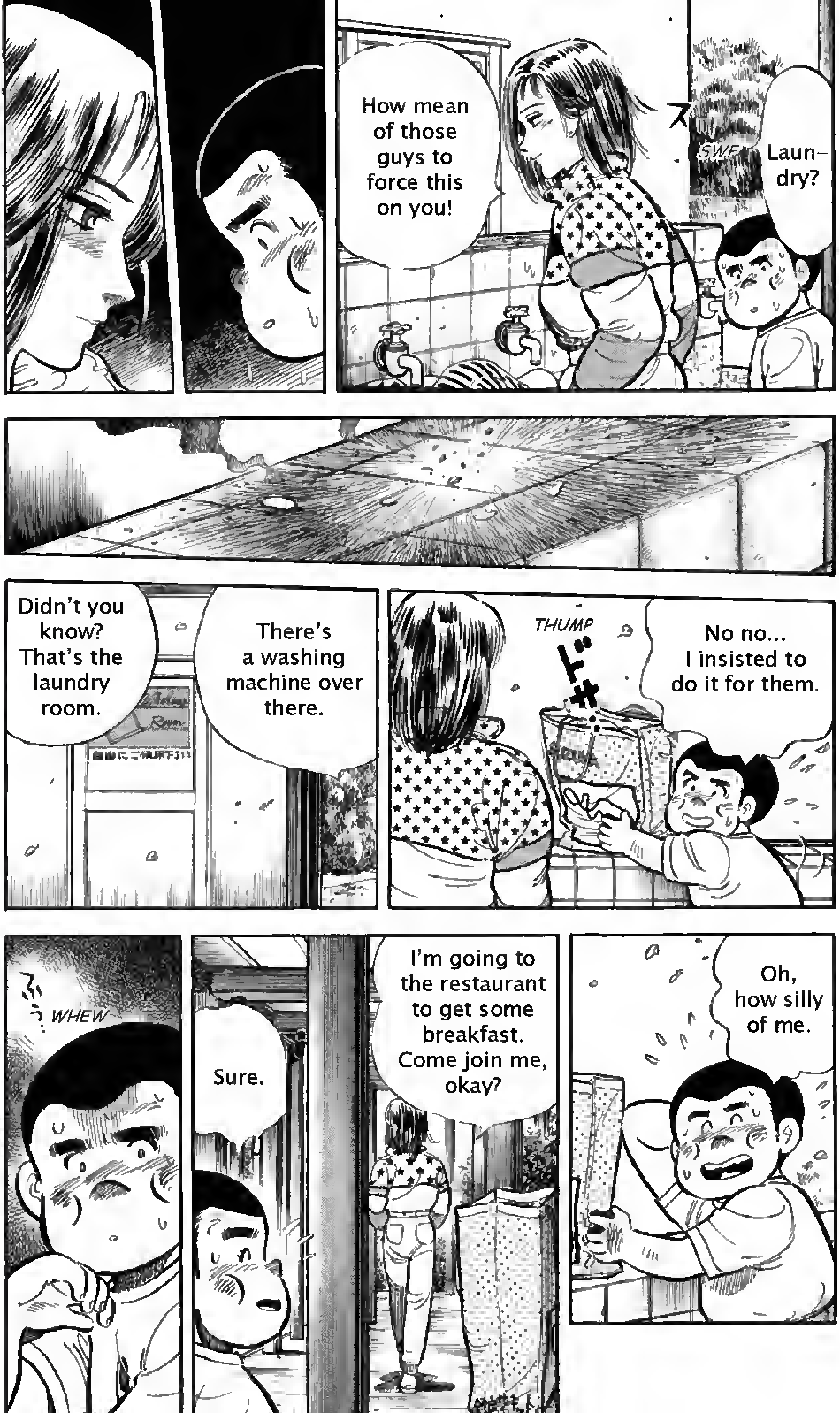

I had to do this in secret, so it took a while to make.


Better test it out.
...


...

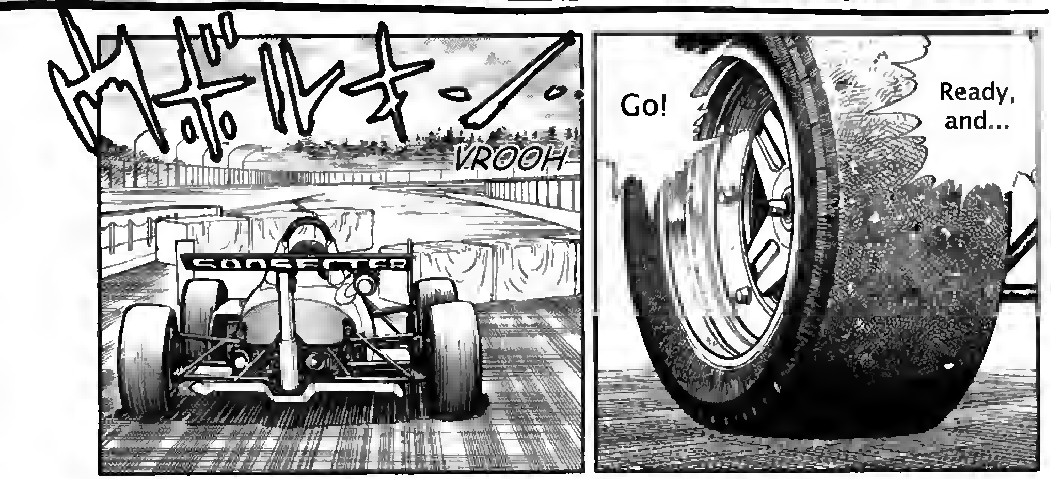
カチ
CLICK
This is the smallest I can make it.
Here it goes.
BOOM
I can kill the ignition system with this!
Yes!

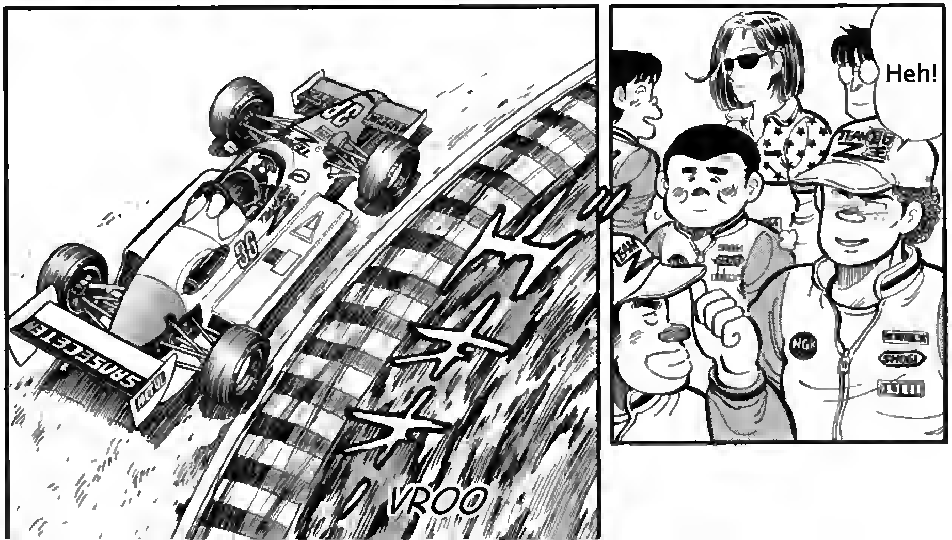
RUSTLE
If I can't make the brakes work, it could get really dangerous.
This'll stop the engine, but I still got the brakes to deal with.
TWITCH
Good morning.
...


How mean of those guys to force this on you!
SWF
Laun-dry?
Didn't you know? That's the laundry room.
There's a washing machine over there.
THUMP
ドド
No no... I insisted to do it for them.
WHEW
Sure.
I'm going to the restaurant to get some breakfast. Come join me, okay?
Oh, how silly of me.

HIZIRI
TEAM 聖
NGK
SPARK PLUGS
36
オリナミンK
SANSECTER
VROOH
VRRRRRRR

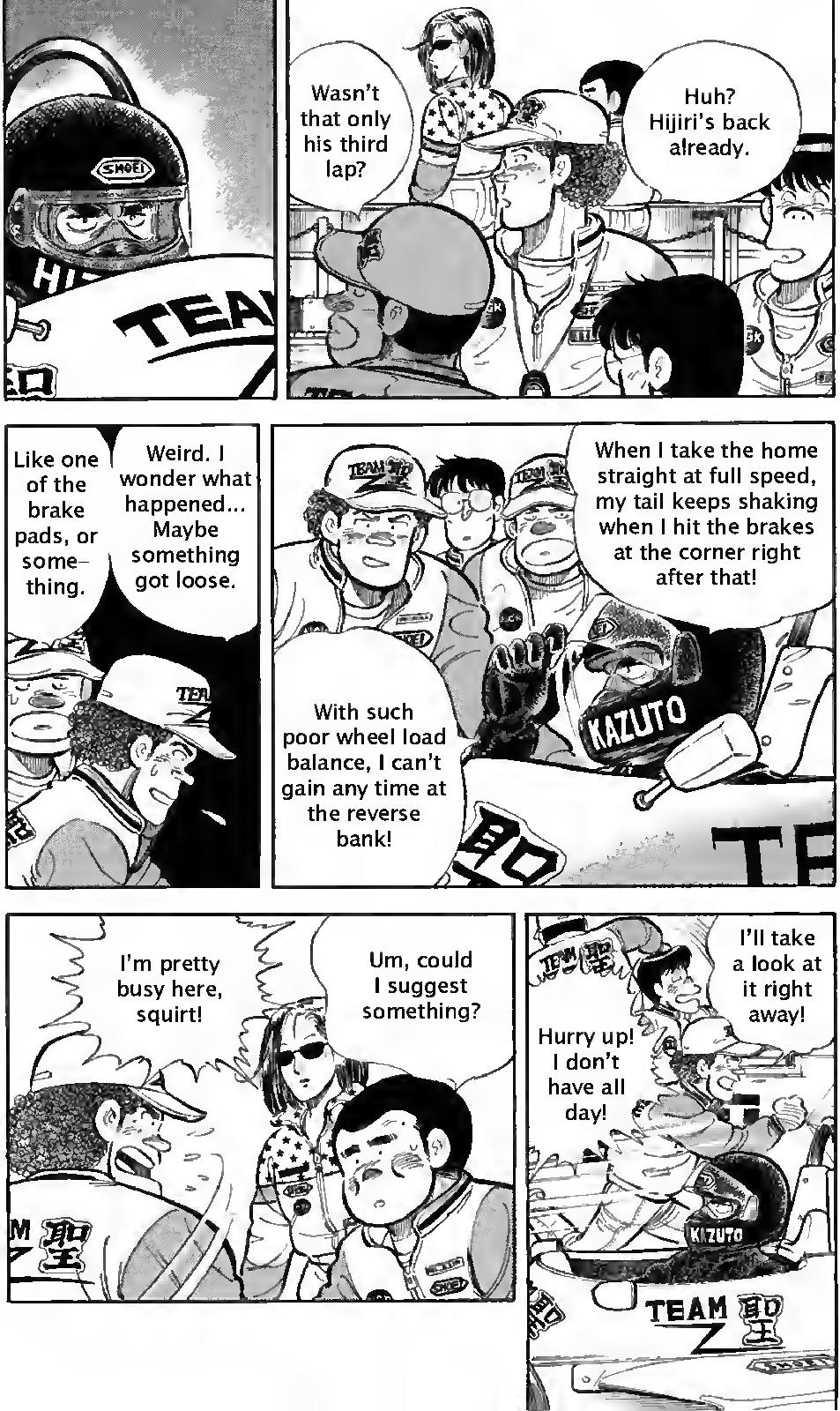
So we're expecting a fast time!
We tuned this car to perfection! Without your little helper there!
KAZ
TEAM
Time to give it a run!
I've pretty much got the Suzuka course down pat!
HIZIRI


VROOH
Go!
Ready, and...

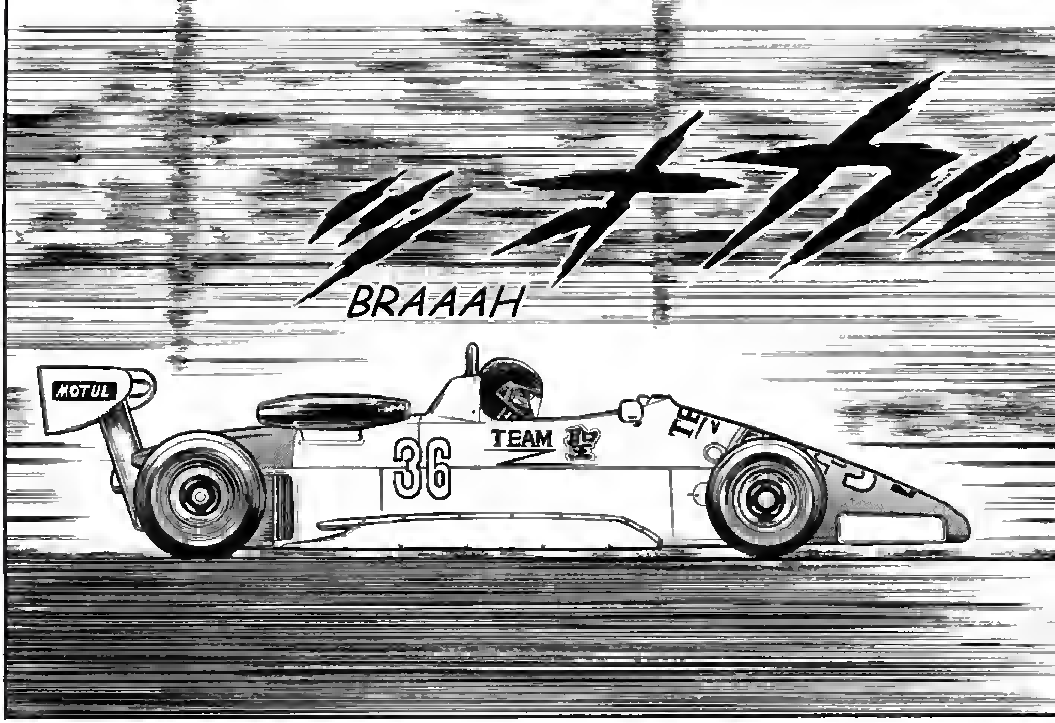

VROO
Heh!

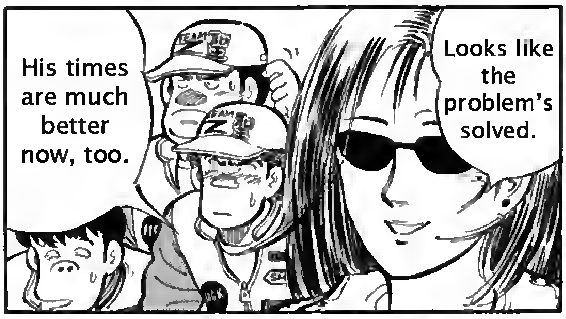
AN
SHOEI
TRC
IRC TIRE
VROOOH
SANSEI
TEAM
36
BROOH

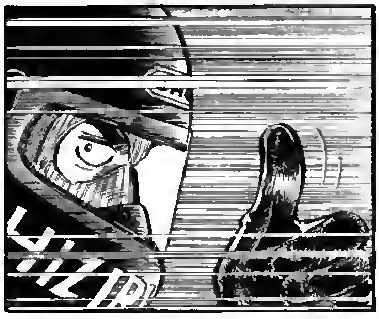
There he is.
HA HA HA HA
YAK YAK
We probably have to drive a ways to find any action.
Is there any nightlife around here?
Let's go chase some tail tonight!
There!
SHOOM
UGH YANK
Gimme that! I'll check his times!
VROOOG
Huh? He should be better than that.
And then we'l ...


SHOEI
Wasn't that only his third lap?
Huh? Hijiri's back already.
Like one of the brake pads, or some-thing.
Weird. I wonder what happened... Maybe something got loose.
When I take the home straight at full speed, my tail keeps shaking when I hit the brakes at the corner right after that!
With such poor wheel load balance, I can't gain any time at the reverse bank!
KAZUTO
I'm pretty busy here, squirt!
Um, could I suggest something?
I'll take a look at it right away!
Hurry up! I don't have all day!
KAZUTO
TEAM

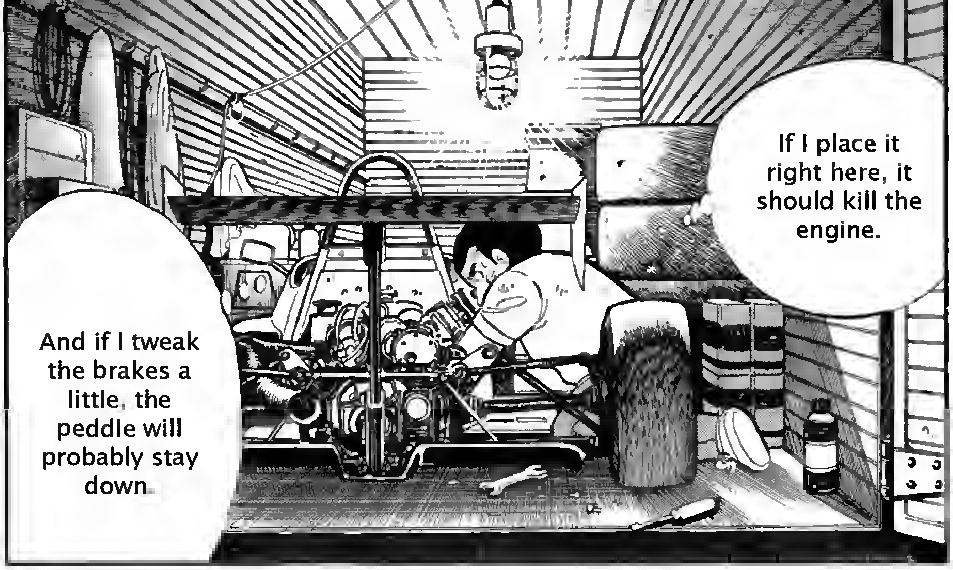
A replacement oughta solve the problem.
Well, the brake rotor temps aren't consistent on both sides. One of the cooling ducts is probably in bad shape.
Let's hear it.
What is it, Tamotsu?
HIZIRI
But... I really don't...
If the tail starts wobblin' after brake temps heat up, it's caused by inconsistent temperature.
If that's the case, it woulda happened before doing so many laps.
That's ridiculous! There's a million things that could cause poor brake balance, like a loose balance bar for one!
Then I'll take another run at it.
All right, Tamotsu. We'll replace the cooling ducts, and that's it.
MOTUL
He he h—


BRAAAH
MOTUL
TEAM
36


His times are much better now, too.
Looks like the problem's solved.

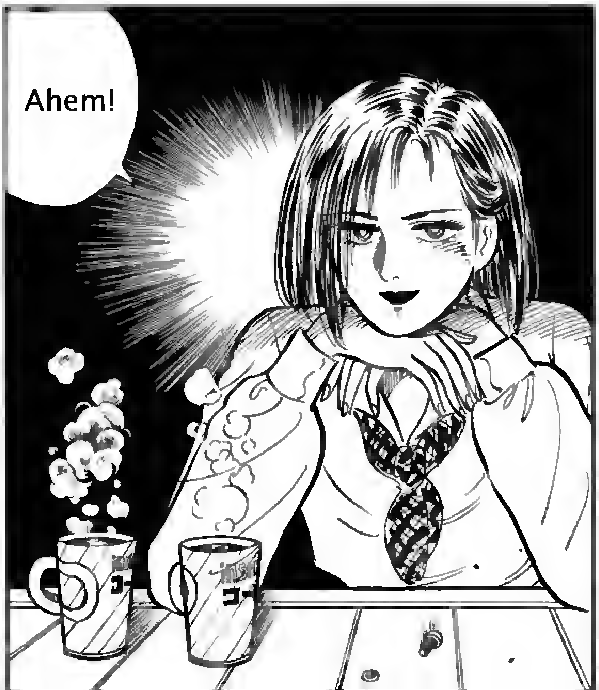

VRRR

It's like we scored an F2-class mechanic, with over 10 years of experience.
He does know a lot for his age.
Ha ha ha ha.
I knew we struck gold with him!
He's still working on something in the transporter.
That's an under-state-ment.
TEAM
Okay...
Take him a nice cup of coffee.
...
GRIN

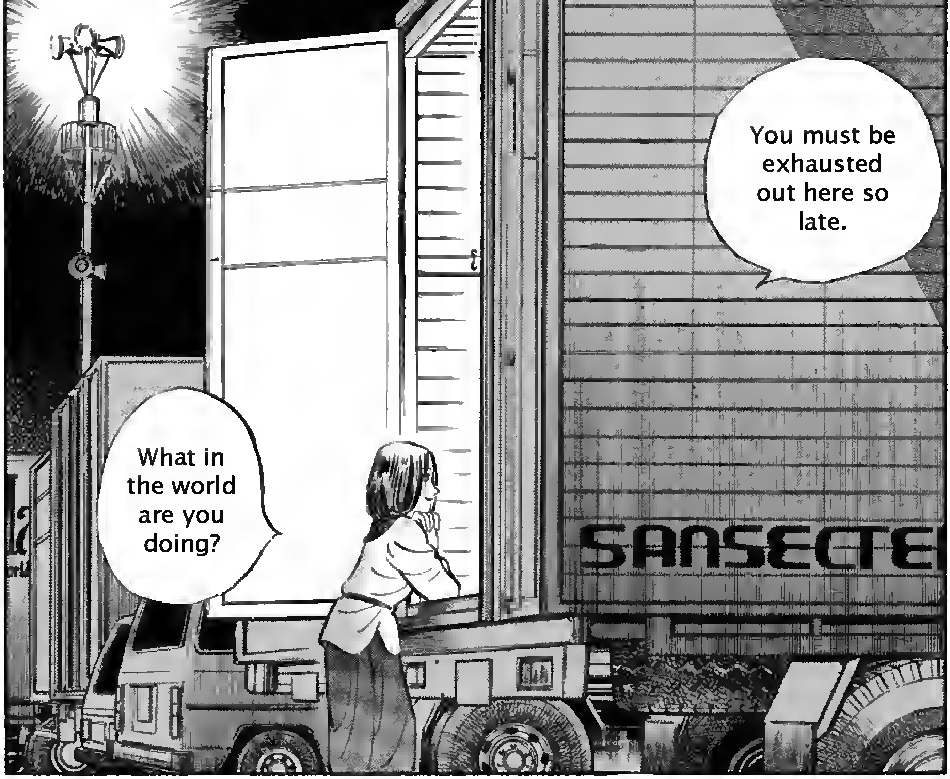

If I place it right here, it should kill the engine.
And if I tweak the brakes a little, the peddle will probably stay down.

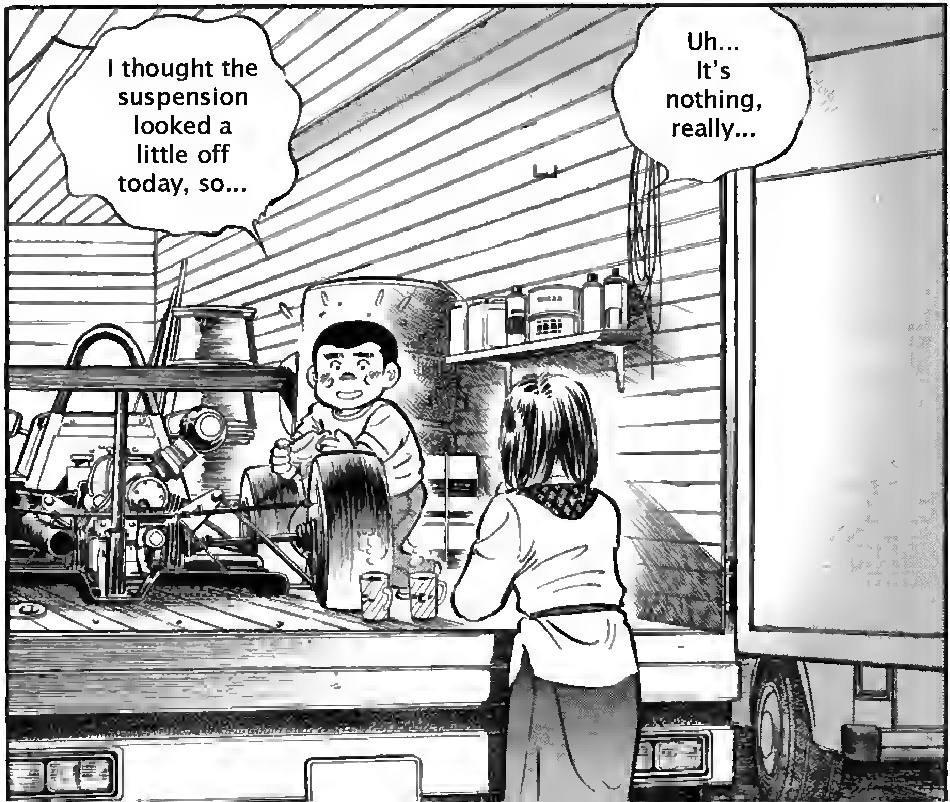
...I'll make sure this car shuts down.
Whatever happens on the course...

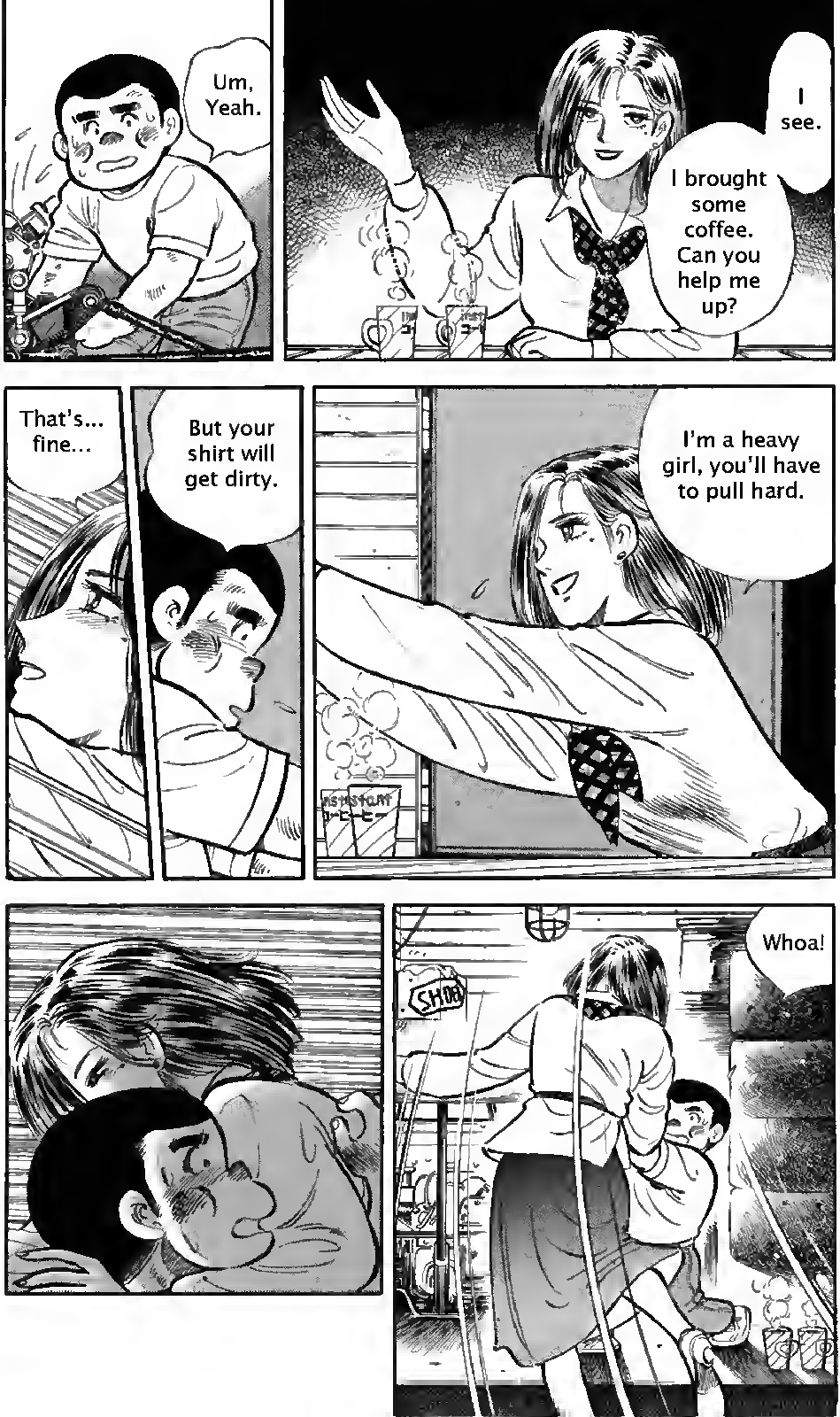
!!
HUH!?

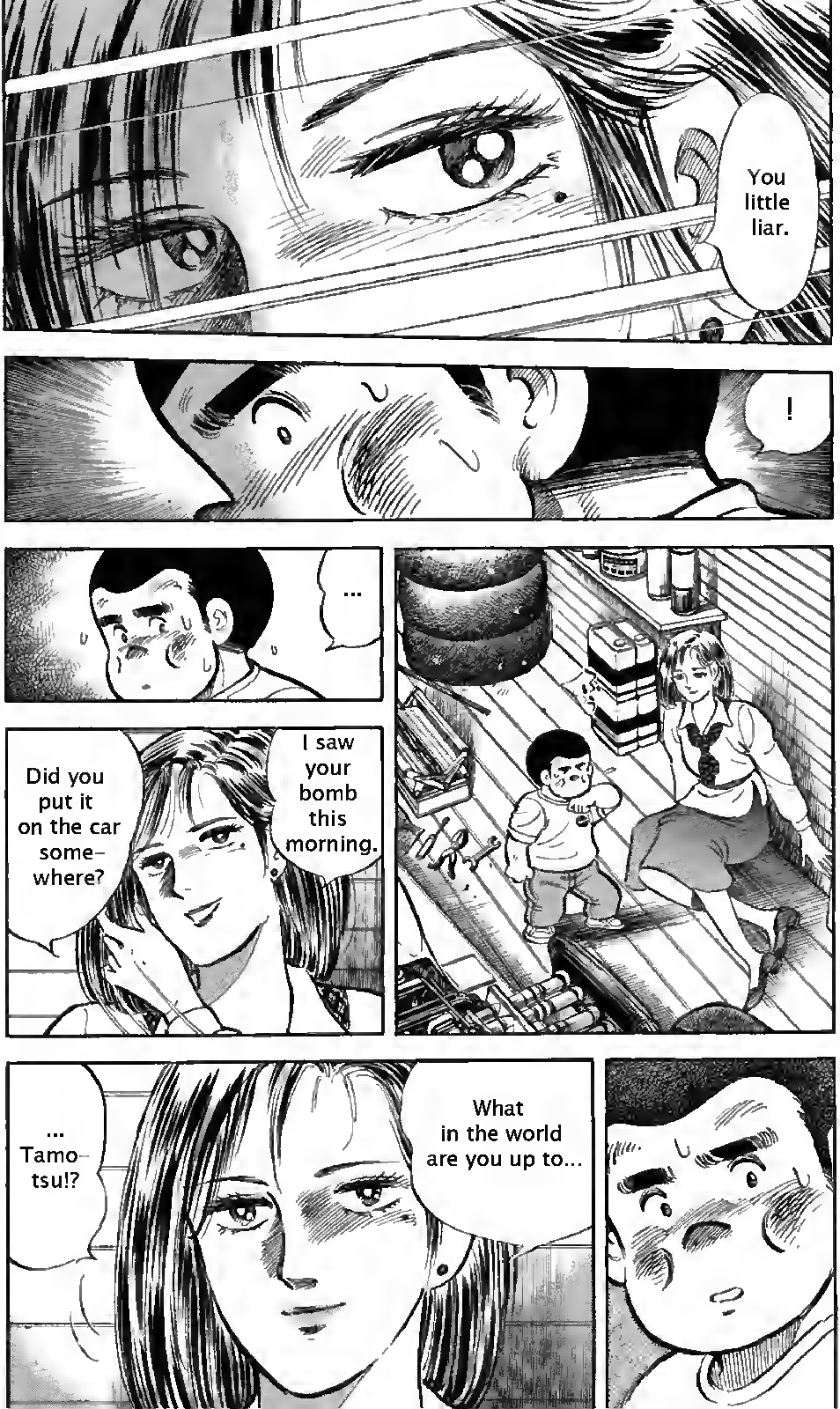

Ahem!

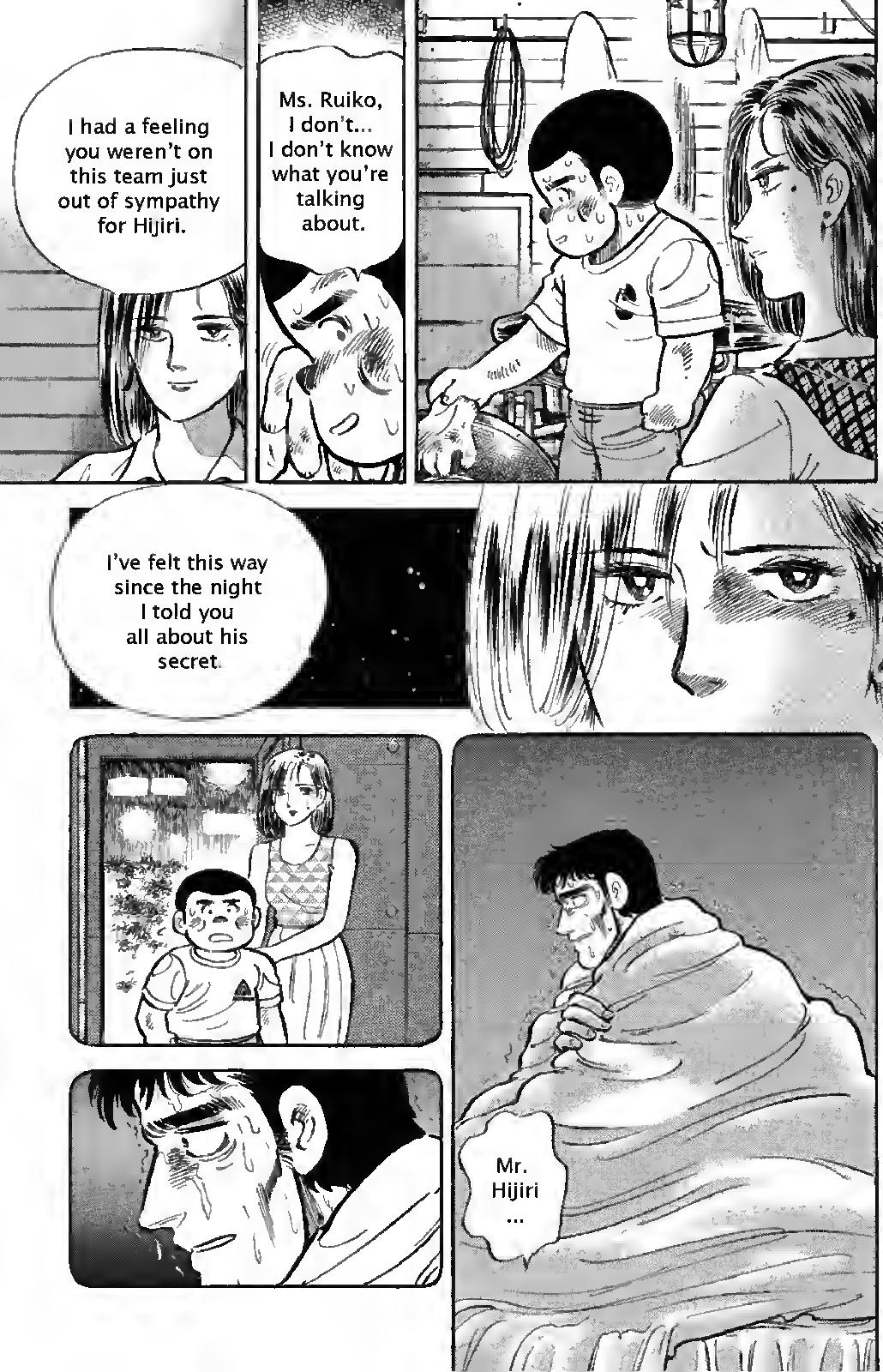
Chapter 10: Hijiri's Secret

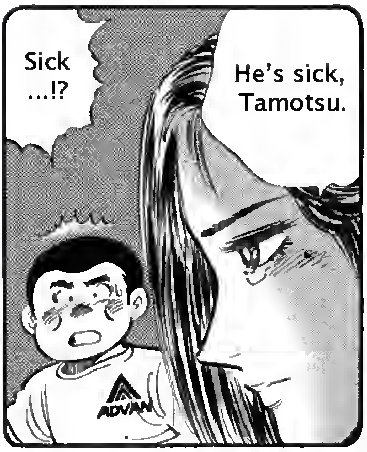

You must be exhausted out here so late.
What in the world are you doing?


I thought the suspension looked a little off today, so...
Uh... It's nothing, really...


Um, Yeah.
I see.
I brought some coffee. Can you help me up?
That's... fine...
But your shirt will get dirty.
I'm a heavy girl, you'll have to pull hard.
Whoa!

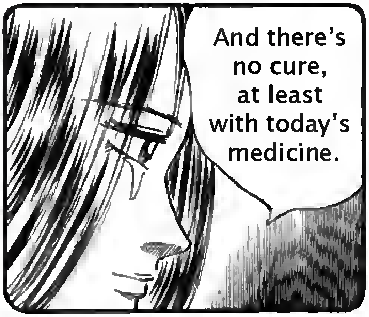

You little liar.
!
...
I saw your bomb this morning.
Did you put it on the car some-where?
What in the world are you up to...
... Tamo-tsu!?

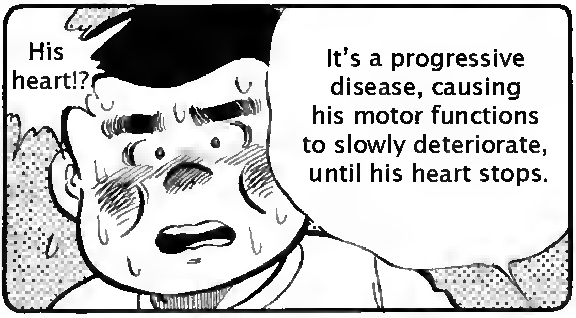

I had a feeling you weren't on this team just out of sympathy for Hijiri.
Ms. Ruiko, I don't... I don't know what you're talking about.
I've felt this way since the night I told you all about his secret.
Mr. Hijiri ...


Sick ...!?
He's sick, Tamotsu.

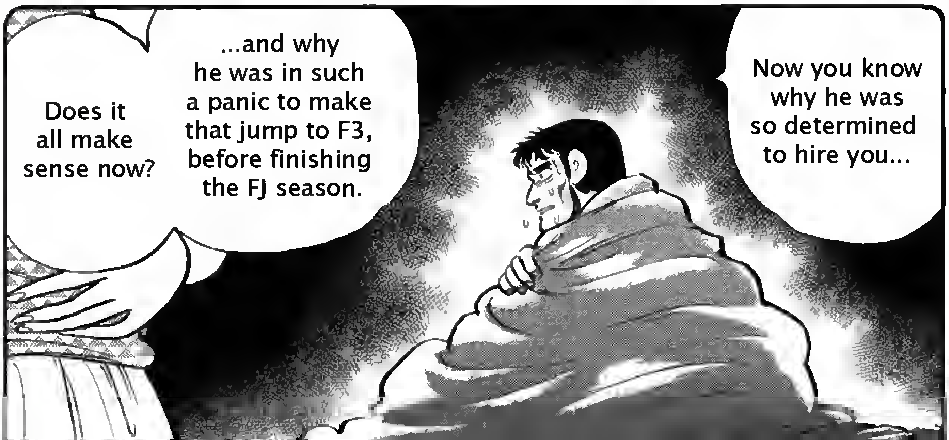
...

What happened to him!?


And there's no cure, at least with today's medicine.


His heart!?
It's a progressive disease, causing his motor functions to slowly deteriorate, until his heart stops.

I never thought ...
I...


Does it all make sense now?
...and why he was in such a panic to make that jump to F3, before finishing the FJ season.
Now you know why he was so determined to hire you...

Please, Tamotsu! Help us fulfill his last request!
Please!
He has no future to think about racing!
The present is all he has left!
I let you in on his secret, in hopes that you would sympathize with him.
I showed you Hijiri having a seizure on that night.
Ex-cept ...
I mean, you're part of the team now, right?
Hijiri was furious when I did that, but I still think it was the right thing to do.

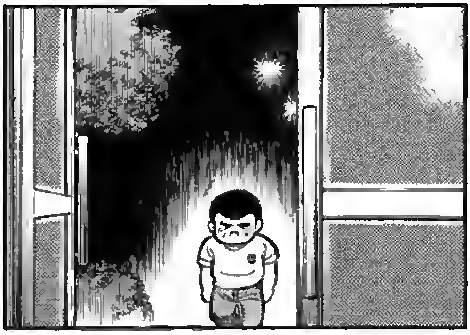
You got it all wrong, Ms. Ruiko. I ain't doin' nothin' malicious.
Just adjusting the suspension.
Really?
...and tampering with his car late at night, doing God knows what.
I find out you're making this weird bomb behind our backs...
Ha ha... When you helped me up just now, I took it from your pocket.
Hey!
Then I can push this button!
TATUNK
Stop it!
Here it goes!
Nope! I'm pushing it!
Give it back!
Wait! If you do that...!

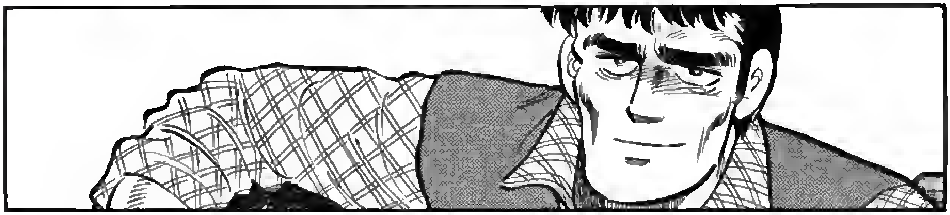
Huh!?
Shh! Somebody's coming... Must be Hijiri!
TUNK
TUNK
TUNK
...

ふう…
WHEW
…
He's gone.

But... Ms. Ruiko ...
SHIVER
I'll just hold onto this, until you muster up the courage to tell me the real reason you joined our team.
This will be our little secret for now.
That was our second kiss.
Hm hm ...
...

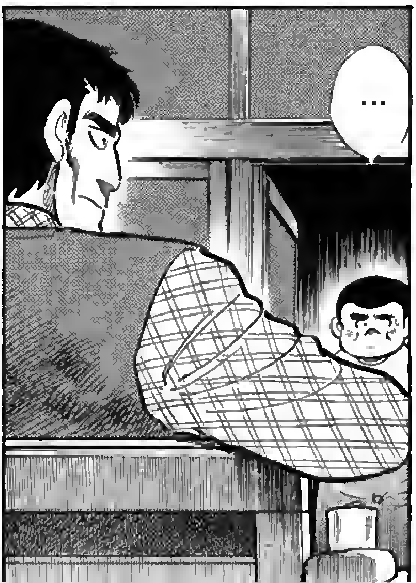
Suzuka Village F





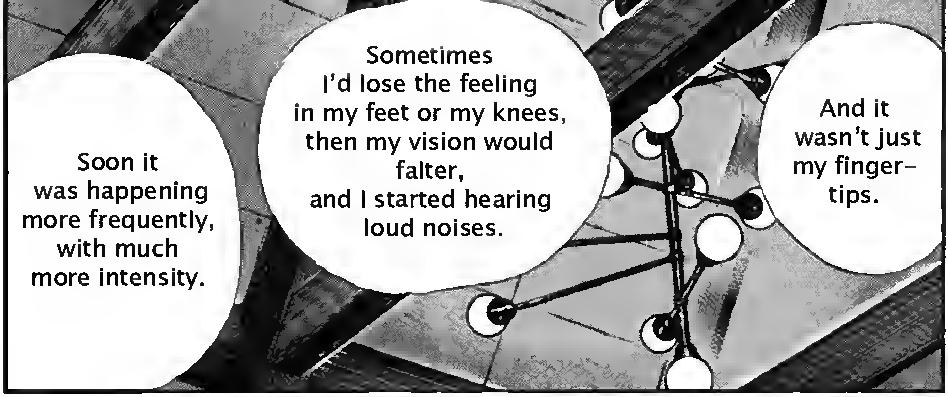
...

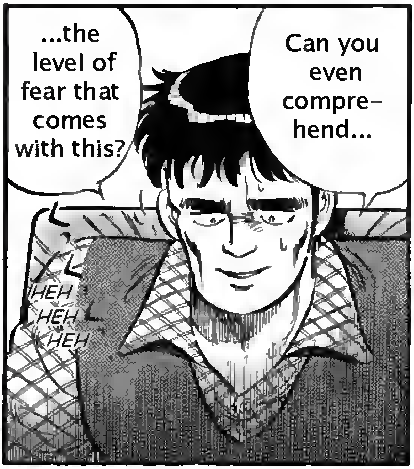
I appreciate the long hours you're putting in. How about a drink?

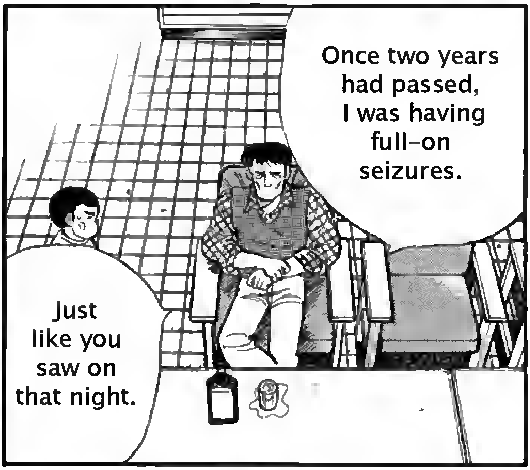

...

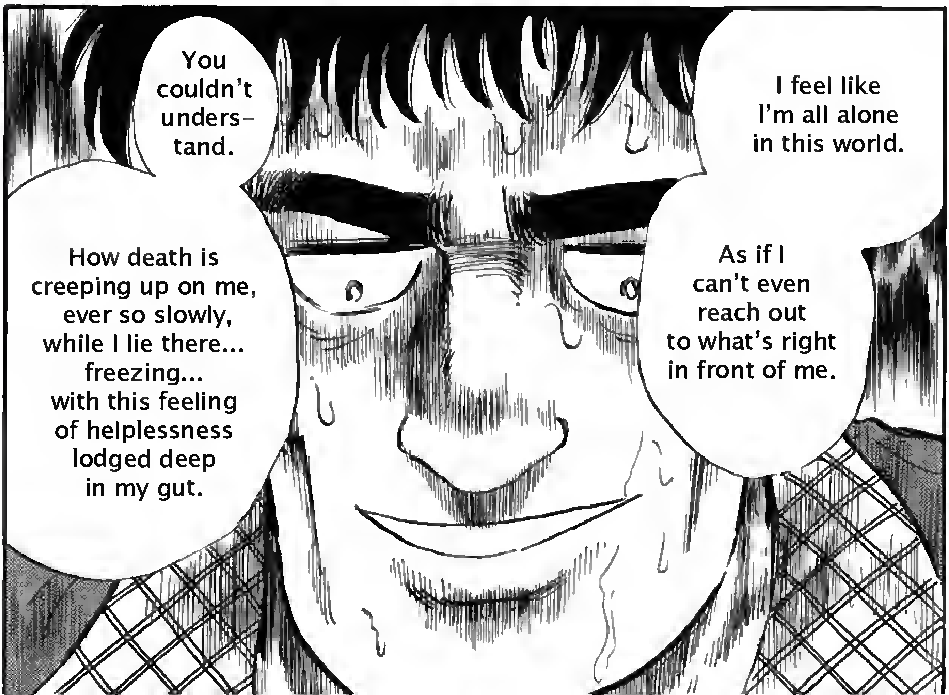
GULP GULP GULP
GULP
I know I'm being selfish, but I want you to take care of Ruiko for me.
As you found out, I'll be dead and gone soon.
Tamo-tsu...
I know she acts... a little forward at times, but deep down she's a good woman.
...
GLUG GLUG
SPLISHHH
GLUG GLUG
In fact, she's more well-suited to a guy like you, living on the straight and narrow.

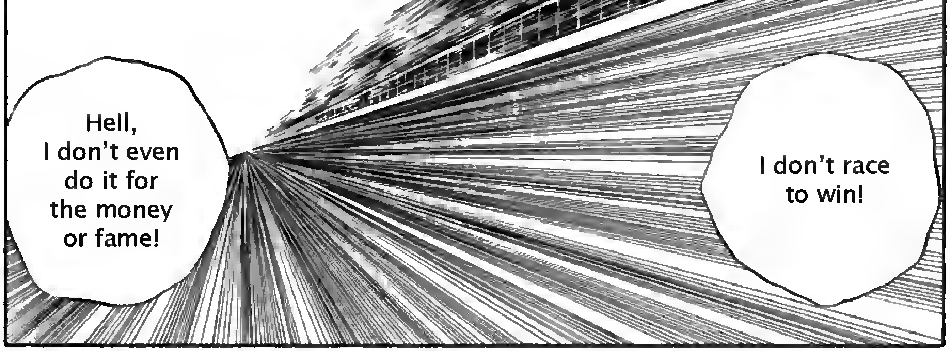
Why are you racing?
Why do you do it?
Can I ask you something?
Um ...
ピク.. TWITCH
In the condition I'm in...
Why do I race?
Hmm.
That's a tough one.
...
Three years ago, I first started losing the feeling in my fingertips.
Didn't think much of it, at first.
But it slowly started happening more often within a year.

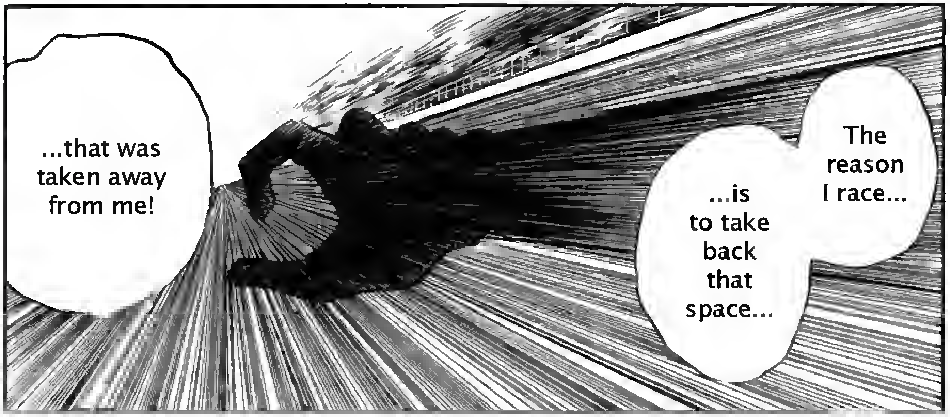

Soon it was happening more frequently, with much more intensity.
Sometimes I'd lose the feeling in my feet or my knees, then my vision would falter, and I started hearing loud noises.
And it wasn't just my finger-tips.

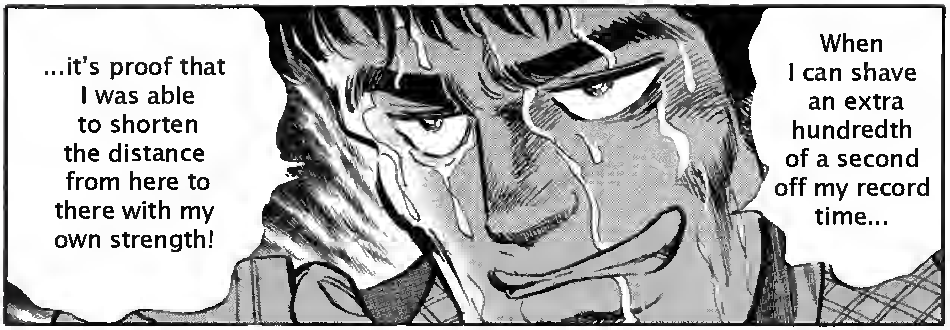

...the level of fear that comes with this?
Can you even compre-hend...
HEH HEH HEH

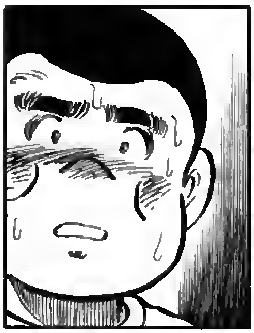

Once two years had passed, I was having full-on seizures.
Just like you saw on that night.


You couldn't unders-tand.
How death is creeping up on me, ever so slowly, while I lie there... freezing... with this feeling of helplessness lodged deep in my gut.
I feel like I'm all alone in this world.
As if I can't even reach out to what's right in front of me.


Hell, I don't even do it for the money or fame!
I don't race to win!


...that was taken away from me!
...is to take back that space...
The reason I race...

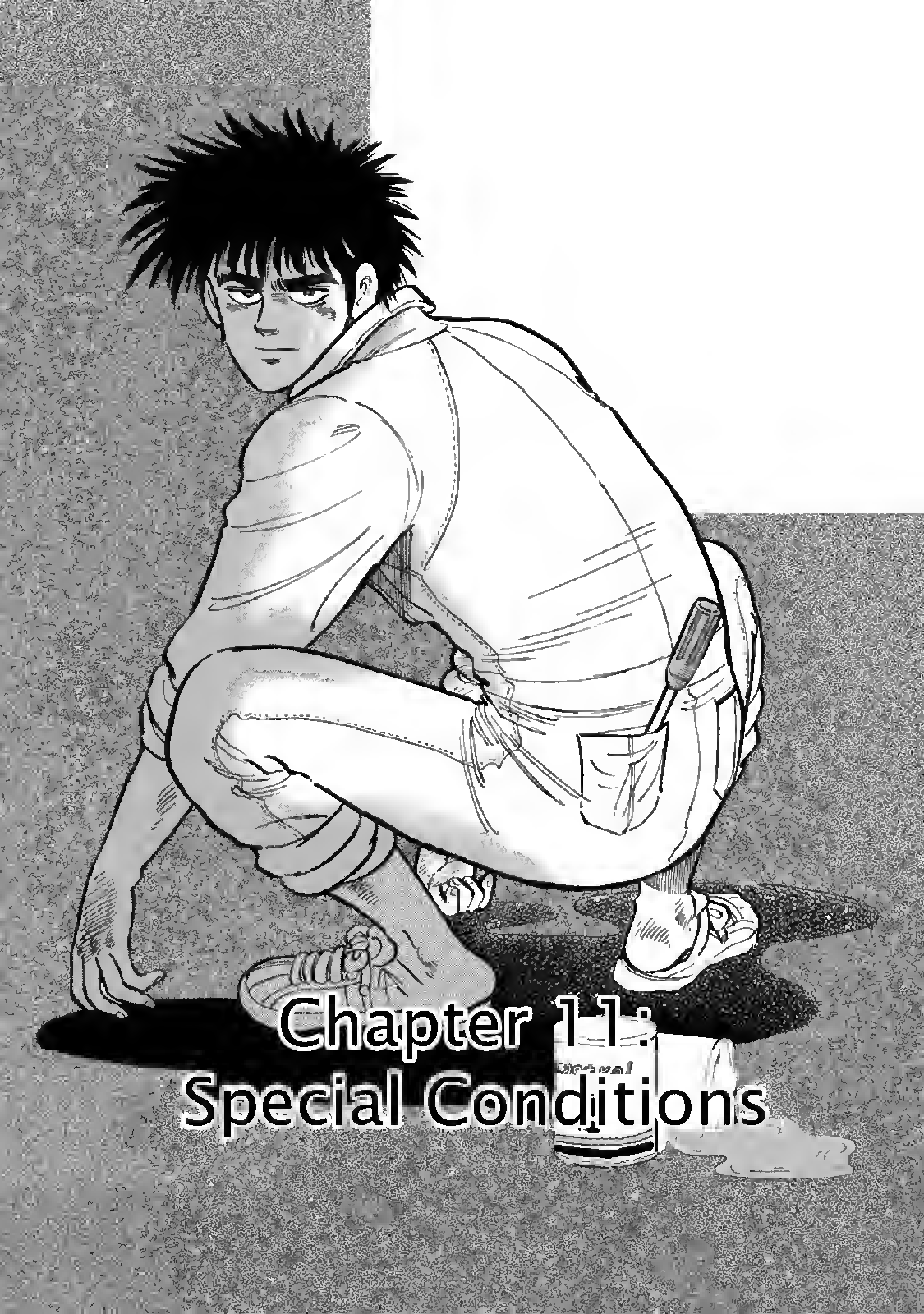

...it's proof that I was able to shorten the distance from here to there with my own strength!
When I can shave an extra hundredth of a second off my record time...



To get it back again, with my own will!
That's the only way I can feel strong again!

I'm going to live free until I die!
You got that, Tamo-tsu!?
SLAM
...the circuit is no place to die!
But, Mr. Hijiri...
SHIVER SHIVER
SHIVER SHIVER
SHIVER
WOOSH

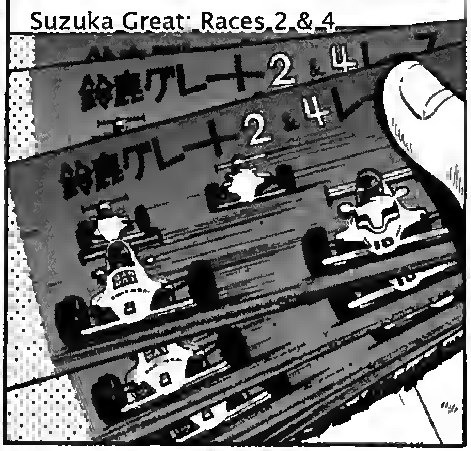
The practice run for Round 6 in Japan's F3 Series has begun!
ハイ
BRAHH
ENKEI
ガヤガヤ
YAK YAK
VRRVRR
ガヤ
YAK
VROOM VROOM
BRIDGESTONE

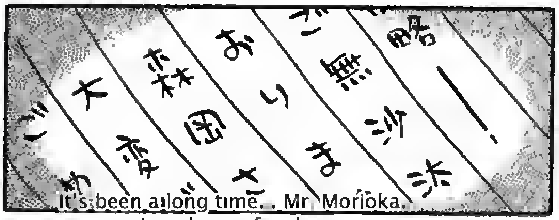


Chapter 11: Special Conditions

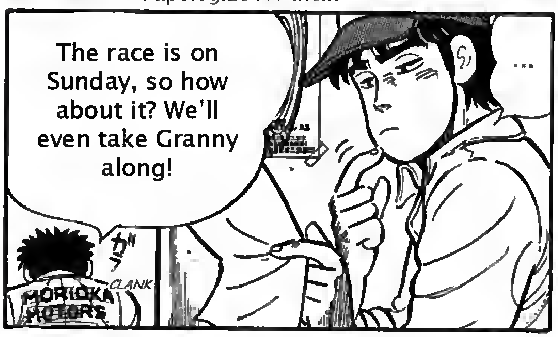
Sick and tired of gettin' up early for all this extra work now that Tamotsu's gone.
Yawn... I'm tired.
It's 11 o'clock.
Morning.
Good morning.
Morioka Motors
Ishizawa Electronics
It's on the desk.
MORIOKA MOTORS
A letter arrived from Tamotsu.
That idiot.
PIK
...

Apparently Hijiri's F3 debut race.
They're tickets to the next race.


Suzuka Great Races 2 & 4
鈴鹿グレート2&4
鈴鹿グレート2&4

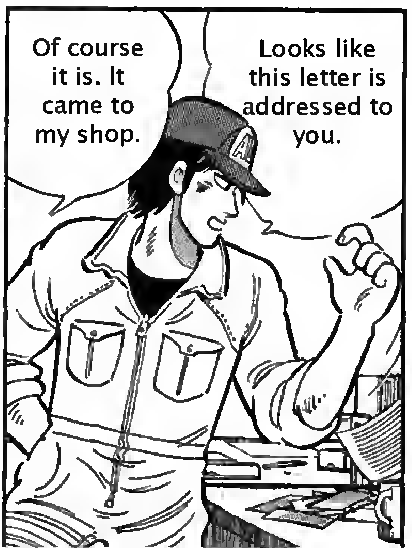

It's been a long time... Mr. Morioka.
I apologize for the...

See the letter in there?
He wants us all to go, and there's a ticket for each of us.

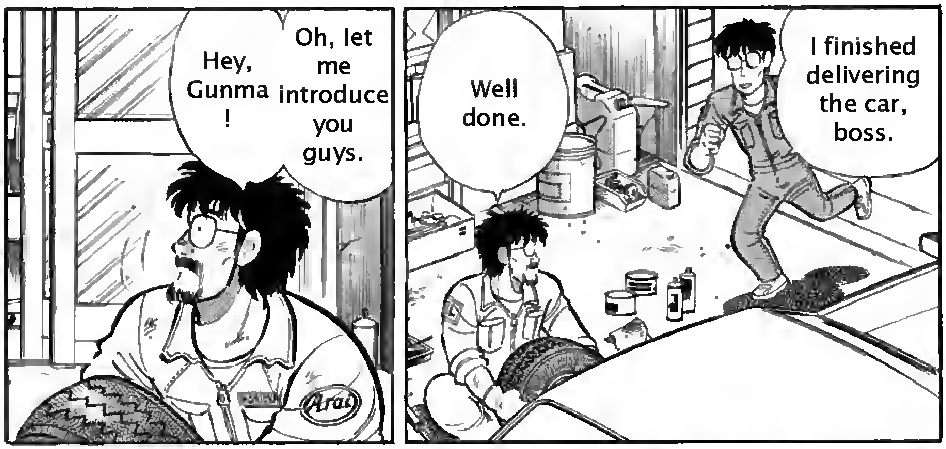

The race is on Sunday, so how about it? We'll even take Granny along!
...
MORIOKA MOTORS
CLANK

Didn't you... get one at the apartment?

What about me?


Of course it is. It came to my shop.
Looks like this letter is addressed to you.

YOKOHAMA
BF Goodrich comp T/A
It's probably too hard to write, since he knows you're still mad and all.
Nope.
Anyway, back to work.
MORIOKA MOTORS


Hey, Gunma!
Oh, let me introduce you guys.
Well done.
I finished delivering the car, boss.

'Sup.
Nice to meet you!
This is Inagaki. Just hired him today, so show him the ropes, will ya?
MORIOKA MOTORS
ALFA
?
Grr...

キュッ
IRK
AHHH
Nobody holds a wrench like that!
Come on.
ORIOKA MOTORS

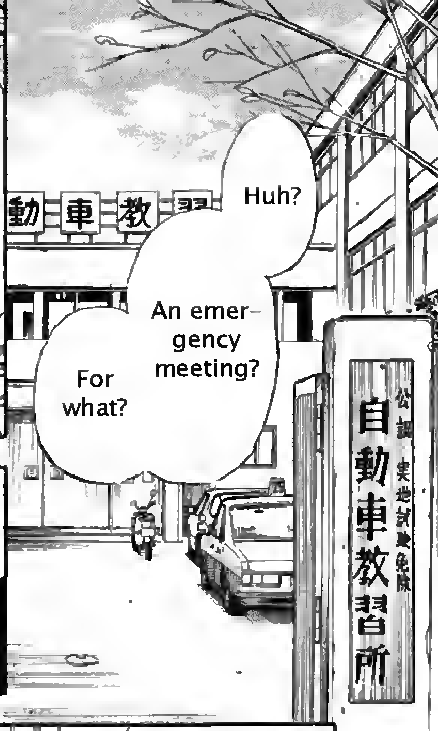
BAM
Sure is. Can I help you?
Is this Morioka Motors?
Sorry to bother you.
Just looking for a guy named Gunma Akagi.
I'm not a customer.
...
How'd you like to drive in F3?
You Gunma Akagi?
OW
UGH
Hey Gunma! Get over here!

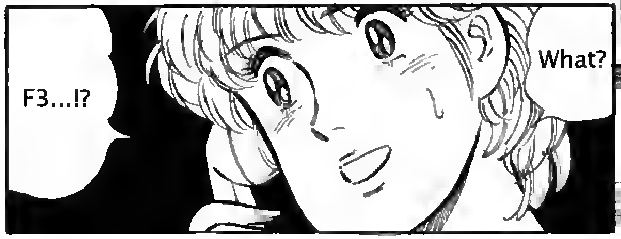
Some-thing about driving in F3?
What did he just say?
TOTAL
L.F.A.
Kuroi Racing Team...
Kuroi Racing Team
Kazuo Kuroi,
President
FWIP
Here you are, sir.
ALFA
We'll provide the race car, mechanic, pit crew, sponsors, and various other things. All you have to do is join our team and race in F3.
You'll even get a monthly salary. So how about it?
I don't have much time, so I'll get right to the point.

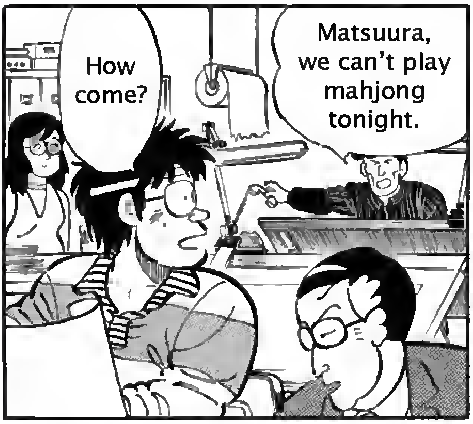
SLAM
Freakin' kidding me!?
Are you, are you...
Gunma?
We looked into your FJ records, and they show that your wins were based on luck more than skill, so you're nothing remarkable.
I can see why you'd be suspicious.
Are you for real, dude?
I'm telling you the truth, although there is a bit of an angle.
...
RRRGH
And most of them would put up 5 million yen for a chance at F3, but still won't get in for sure.
There are tons of drivers in the FJ1600-A with more skill than you.
This is a dream come true for you, kid.

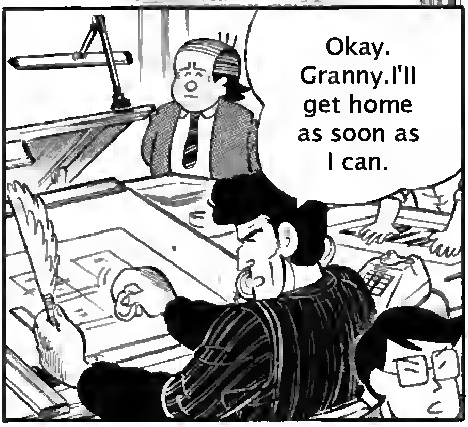
I'll leave the tickets here, so come watch if you're interested.
Anyway, I have to get to Suzuka right away.
See you in Suzuka.
SLAM
...
VRRRRRR
...
...

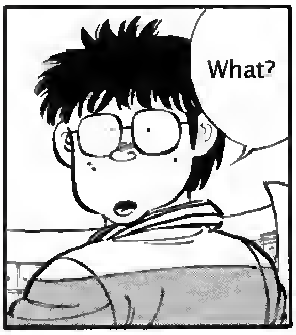
会計
But what's this all about?
Fine, I'll go straight home.
I don't plan on stopping anywhere.


自動車教習所
公認 実地試験免除
Huh?
An emergency meeting?
For what?


What?
F3...!?

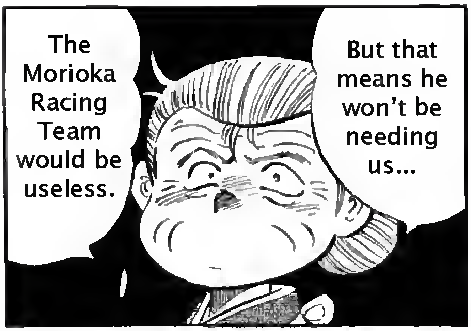

How come?
Matsuura, we can't play mahjong tonight.


Okay. Granny. I'll get home as soon as I can.

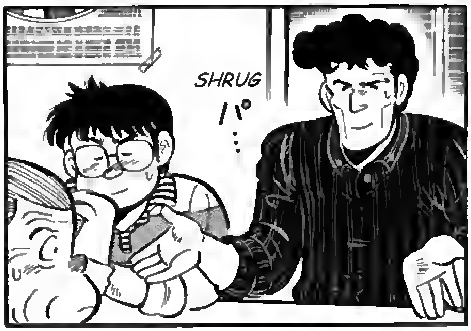

What?

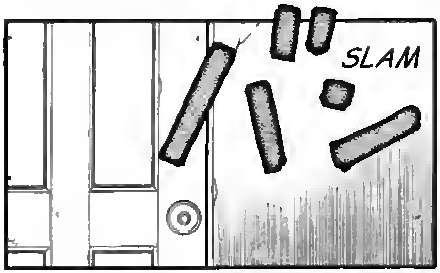
And we need to discuss whether or not it's too good to be true.
Gunma just hit the proverbial jackpot.

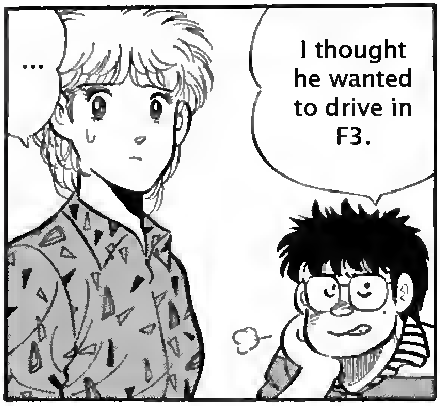
Kitrol Racing Team
Kazuo Kamii
President
This...
...is good news.
I really think it's good.
A little too good, don't you think?
I'd say so.
Hmm...
Why would something like this come up all of a sudden?
It doesn't sound like a scout who fell in love with Gunma's driving.
I...
...ain't going!
But just turning him down...
...would be such a waste.
SHOOOH
That guy was pretty full of himself. And his eyes creeped me out a little.
The eyes of a conman or a pervert.


The Morioka Racing Team would be useless.
But that means he won't be needing us...

They've even got a mechanic and a pit crew for you.
He said he'd provide the race car, and even a salary.

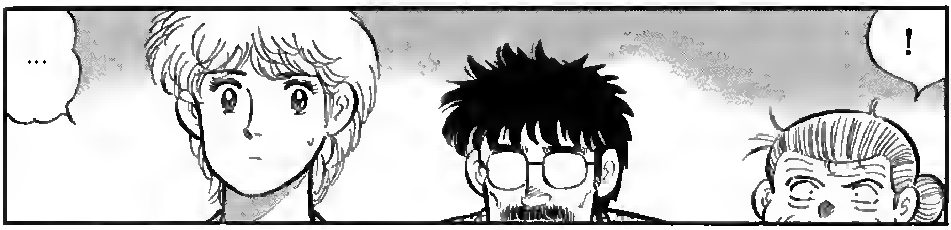

SHRUG

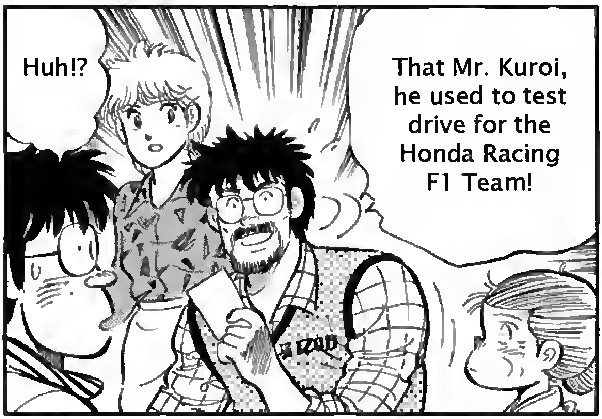

SLAM

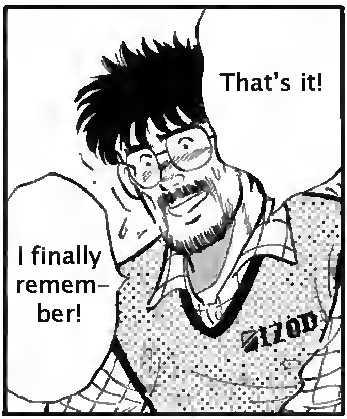

...
I thought he wanted to drive in F3.

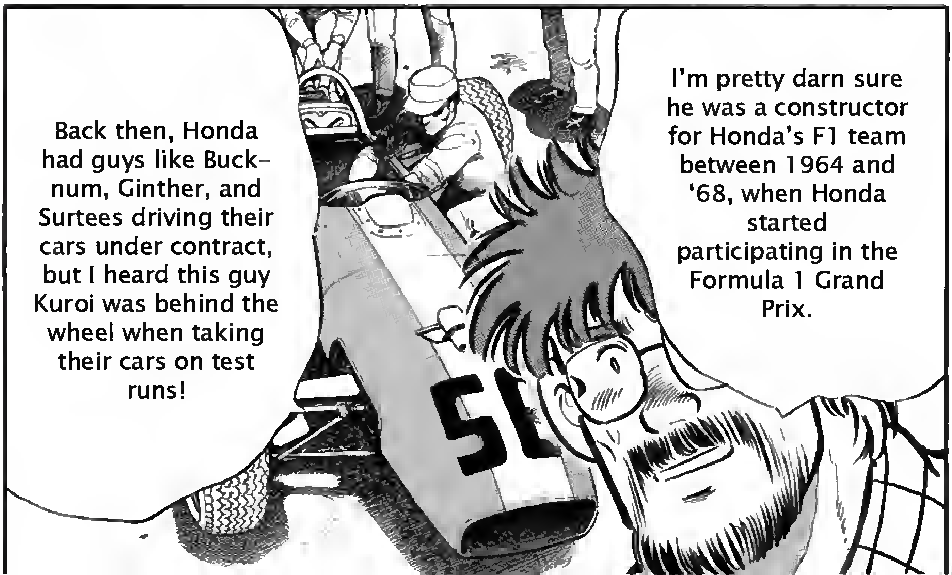
No way I'm gonna let some conman take advantage of my incredible talents!
I said I ain't going!
Suzuka sucks anyway!

...could he be considering our feelings in all this?
This might sound odd, but...


...
!

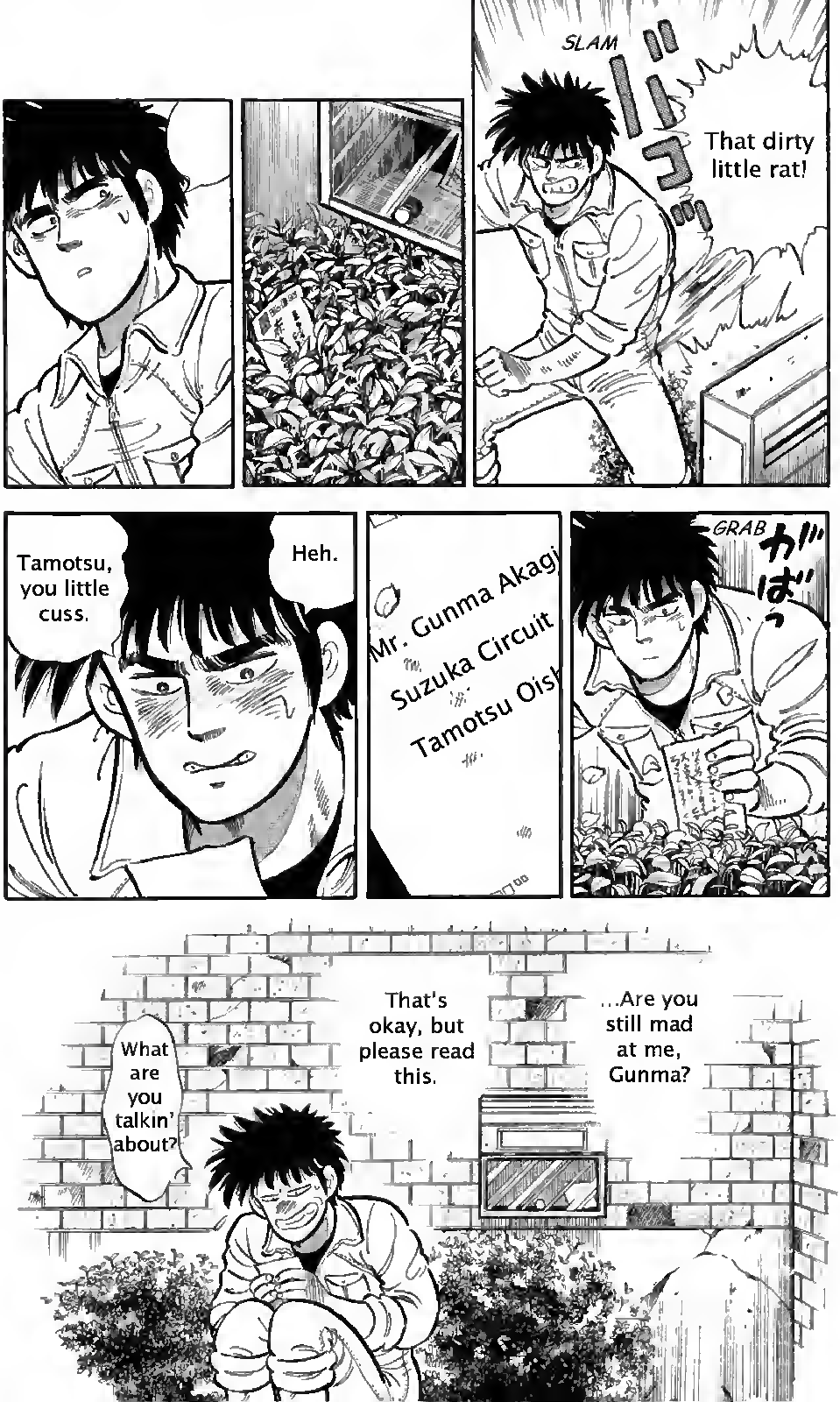

Huh!?
That Mr. Kuroi, he used to test drive for the Honda Racing F1 Team!
IZOD


That's it!
I finally remember!
IZOD


Back then, Honda had guys like Bucknum, Ginther, and Surtees driving their cars under contract, but I heard this guy Kuroi was behind the wheel when taking their cars on test runs!
I'm pretty darn sure he was a constructor for Honda's F1 team between 1964 and '68, when Honda started participating in the Formula 1 Grand Prix.

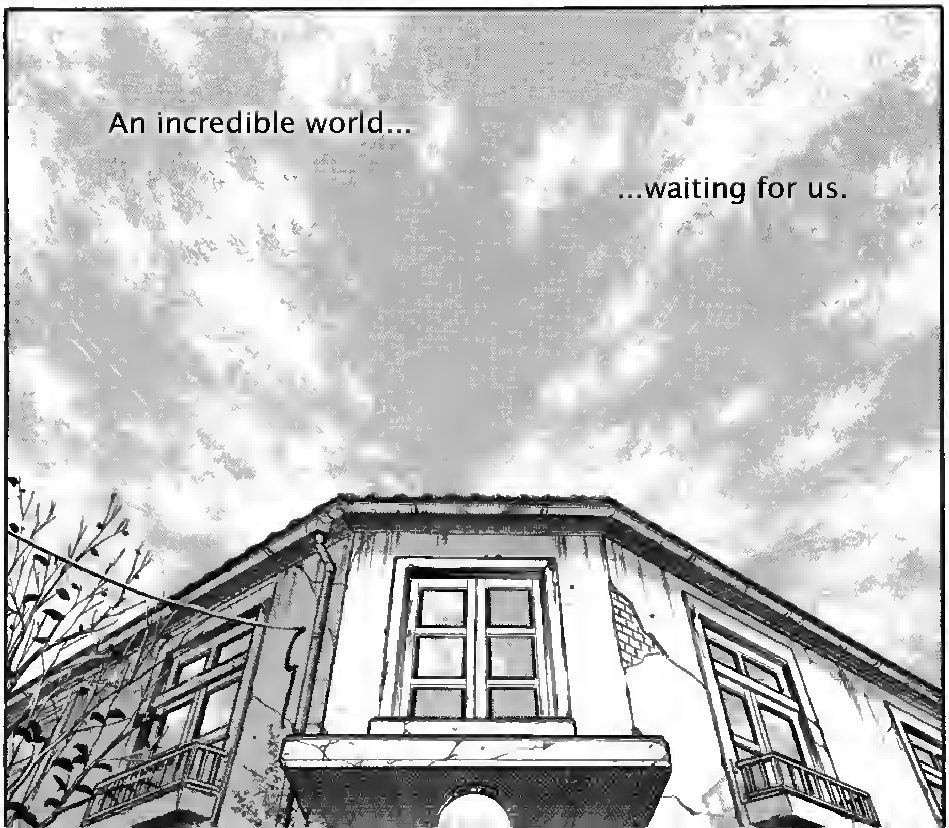
If memory serves me.
Yeah.
A Japanese driver, with that level of skill!?
I even heard rumors that Kuroi could drive a lot faster than those foreign drivers.
But why!?
If he's that good, how come he never entered any races!?
Good question.
I really don't know a thing about this guy's background.
Just some iffy rumors and legends about him.
But the reason Kazuo Kuroi never drove in F1 races, once again according to rumors...
...is that he was thought to be "too Japanese."
IZOD

But...
Maybe they just share the name.
I don't know.
So this supposed legend... Is the same guy on the business card?
...why would he ask for Gunma?
If it really is him...
I knew it. Empty.
Tsh.
RUSTLE
RUSTLE


SLAM
That dirty little rat!
Heh.
Tamotsu, you little cuss.
Mr. Gunma Akagi
Suzuka Circuit
Tamotsu Oishi
GRAB
What are you talkin' about?
That's okay, but please read this.
...Are you still mad at me, Gunma?

Gunma, F3 is awesome!
You won't believe how fast these guys can go!
This is the first time I've ever experienced a true formula race car!
You and me are shooting for F1, and I can only imagine what that's like!
I get chills just thinking about it!
I'm talkin' formula racing. And still, it's only F3!
Keep racing, Gunma! And I'll keep tuning! There's an incredible world just waiting for us!

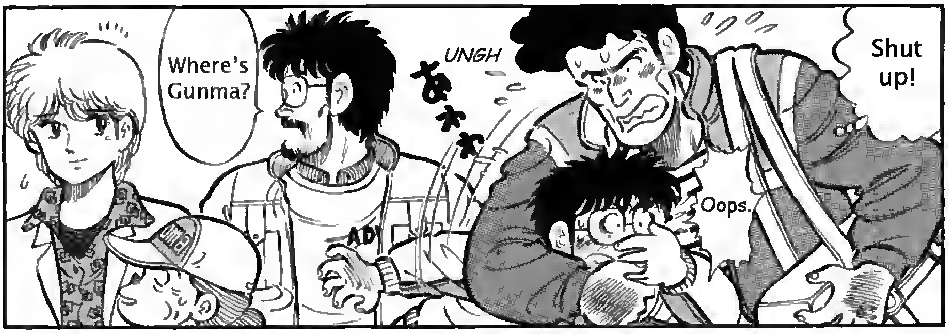
QUIVER
QUIVER
QUIVER

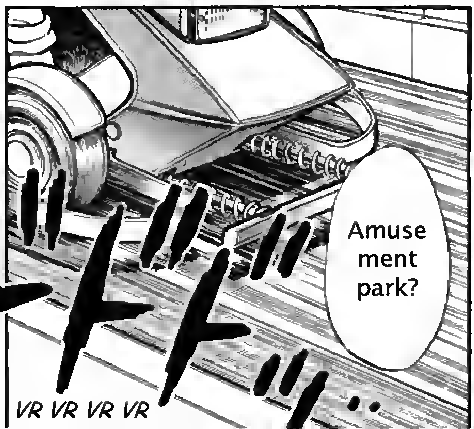

An incredible world...
...waiting for us.

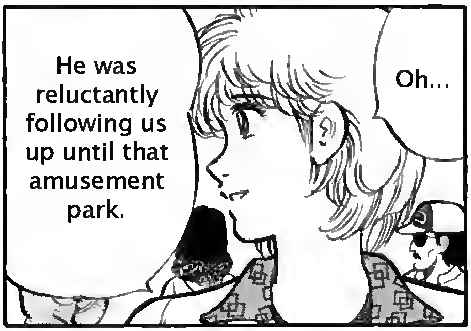
Chapter 12: The Breaking Point

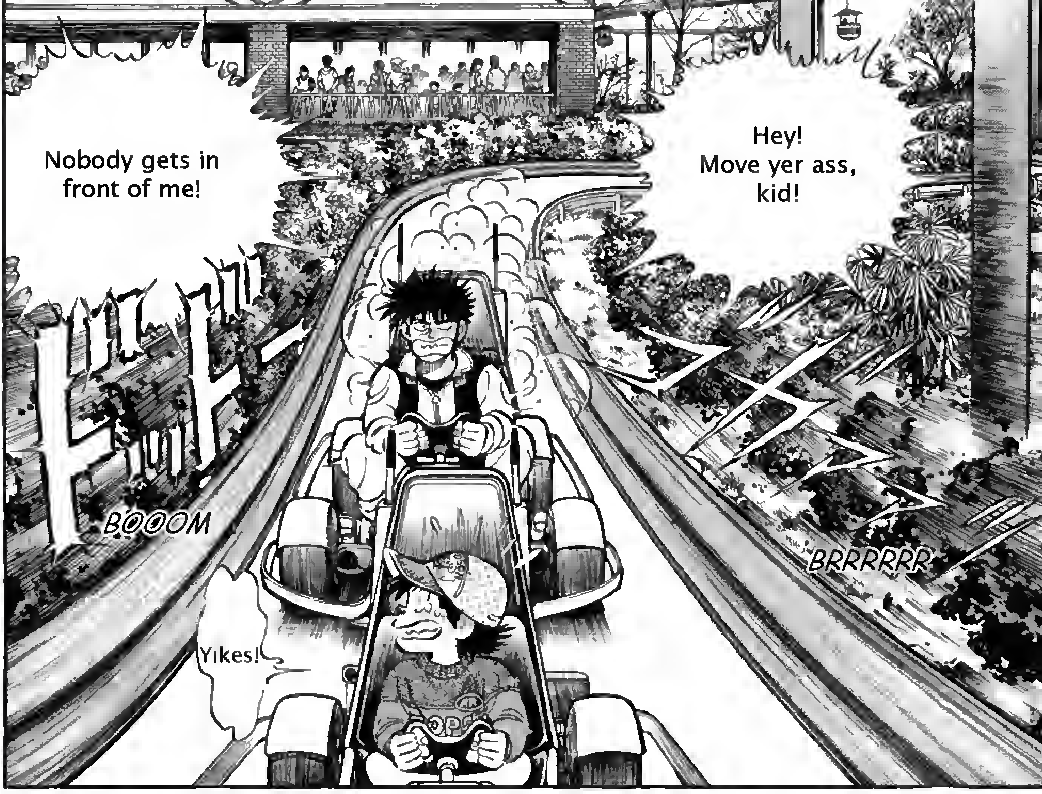
ワオ
WOOHOO
ヤー
YEAH
ヤッ
YAK
ヤッ
YAK
First Corner
S-Curve
Degner Curve
Crossover Bridge
Spoon Curve
Hairpin Curve
Chicane
Last Corner
Course Length: 5.913 meters
INTERNATIONAL RACING COUSE
SUZUKA CIRCUIT
Completed September 1962. this is the first internationally recognized course in Japan.

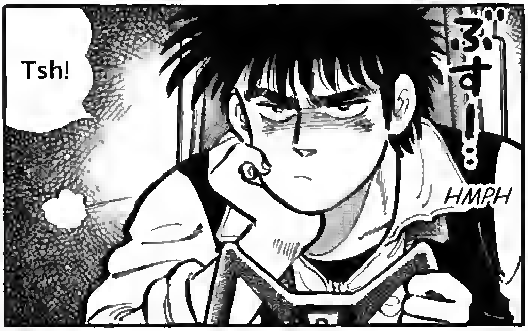
Suzuka hasn't changed a bit.
Still got that reverse bank after the S-curve, the degner and the spoon.
How you come out of the chicane effects your speed on the home straight.
We haven't been here for a long time. Ever since Ryuji's accident.

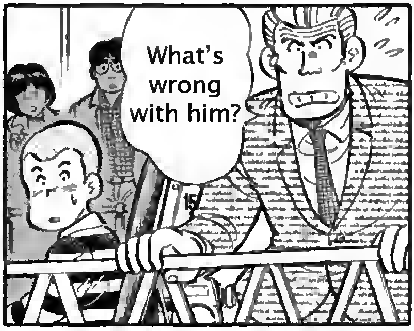

Where's Gunma?
UNGH
Shut up!
Oops.

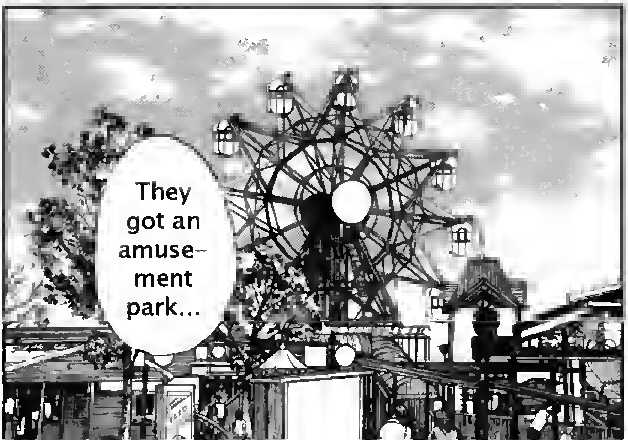

Amuse ment park?
VR VR VR VR


He was reluctantly following us up until that amusement park.
Oh...

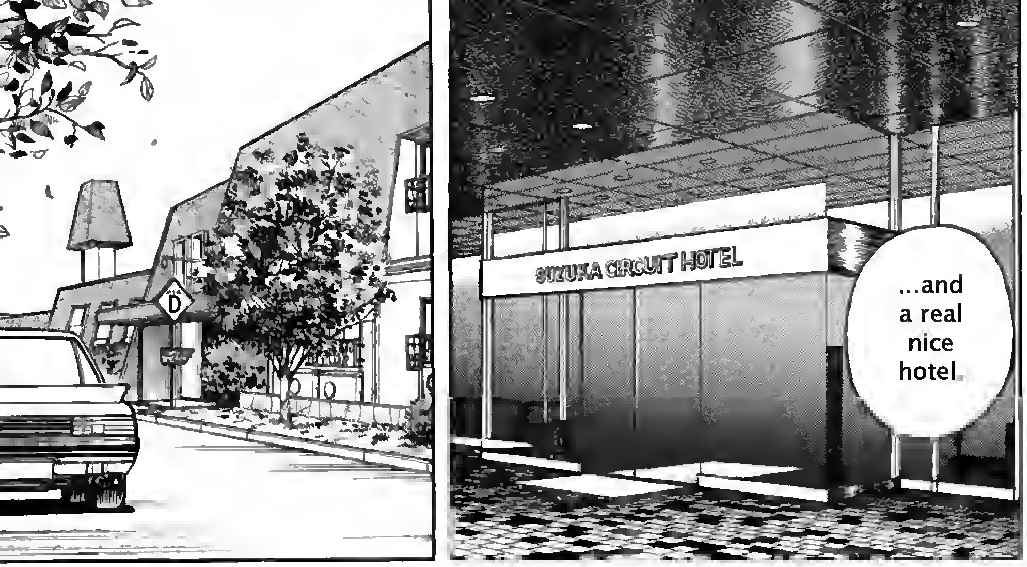

Nobody gets in front of me!
Hey! Move yer ass, kid!
BOOOM
BRRRRRR
Yikes!

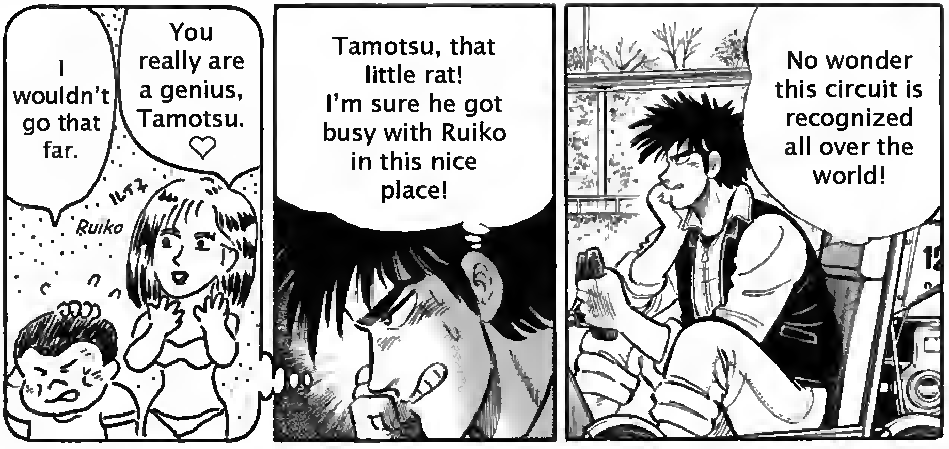

Tsh!
ぶすー
HMPH


What's wrong with him?


They got an amuse-ment park...

Suzuka ain't half bad.
It really ain't.

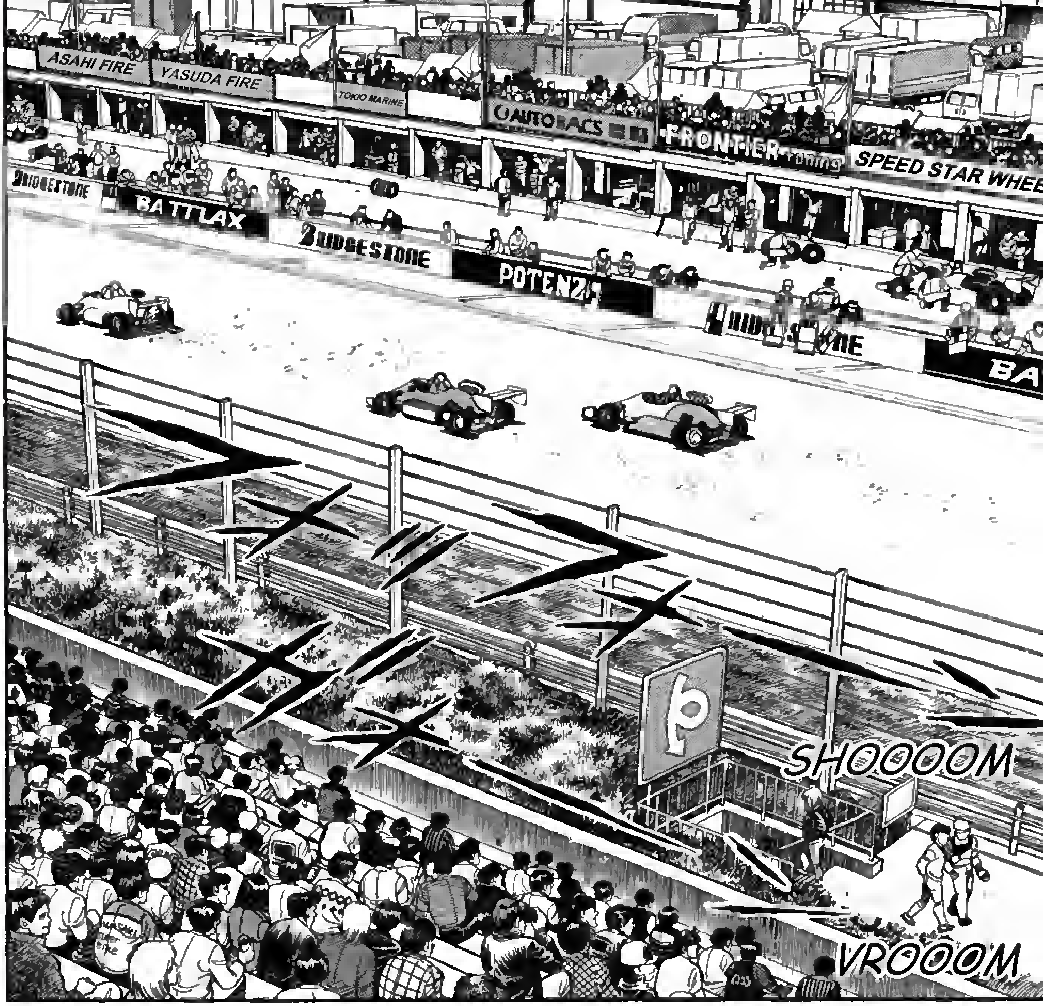

SUZUKA CIRCUIT HOTEL
...and a real nice hotel.

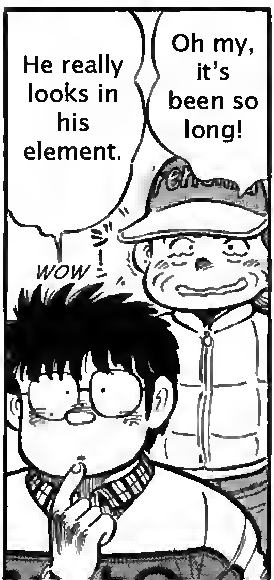

You really are a genius, Tamotsu. ♡
I wouldn't go that far.
Ruiko
Tamotsu, that little rat! I'm sure he got busy with Ruiko in this nice place!
No wonder this circuit is recognized all over the world!

What a nutjob.
It's like he's in his own little world.
Hey.
Ha! Wouldn't go that far? What a dumbass!
MUMBLE
MUMBLE
MUMBLE
12

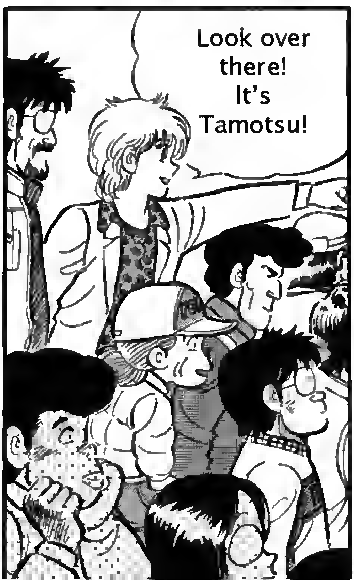
HA HA HA
AW SHUCKS
I think you're both incredible!
No no, it's your tuning that made my car the best.
Golly! Yer incredible, Mr. Hijiri!
むかっ
No good, dirty rotten...
Grrr...
むむむ
You and me are shooting for F1... Keep racing, Gunma! And I'll keep tuning! There's an incredible world just waiting for us! Tamotsu
We'll provide everything. The race car, mechanic, and pit crew. All you have to do is drive.

I'll show you drivin'!
Want me to drive, kid!?
We can't get through!
Hey! Move it, dude!
Would you just drive, mister?
YOUNG
ZOOM
He'll be there when the race starts.
Let's go!
ギャギャギャギャギャ
SCREEEEEECH
Wow.


ASAHI FIRE
YASUDA FIRE
TOKIO MARINE
AUTOBACS
FRONTIER
SPEED STAR WHEE
BRIDGESTONE
BATTLAX
BRIDGESTONE
POTENZA
SHOOOOM
VROOOM

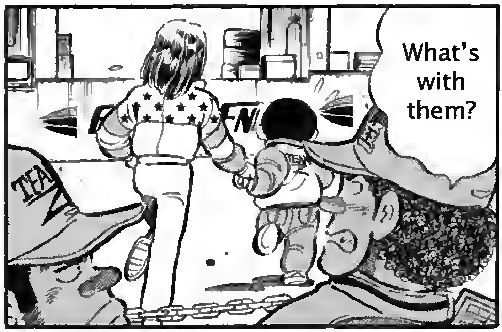

He really looks in his element.
Oh my, it's been so long!
WOW

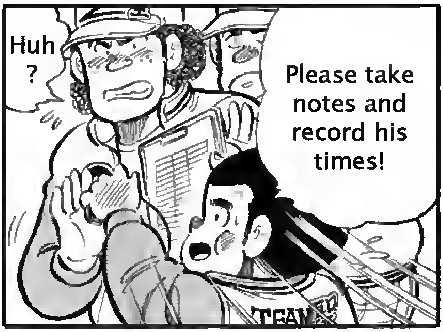
KAZUTO

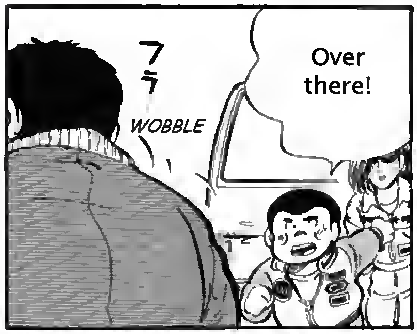

Look over there! It's Tamotsu!

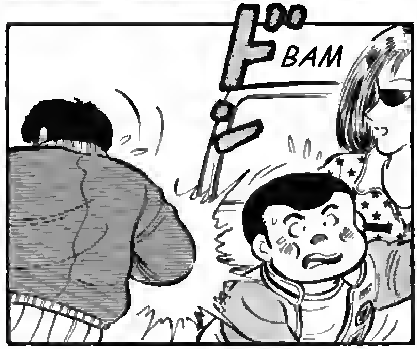
Sure!
?
KAZU
GRIN
Watch out for "bombs," babe!
I'm good! Watch me get a great time!
You okay!?
VROOM
BROOOH
Each of the F3 cars will now compete for best time in this preliminary race!
VRRR
I'll spill it all to him when this preliminary is over!
Ha ha ha...
SHOE!
You told him about the...
Ms. Ruiko...

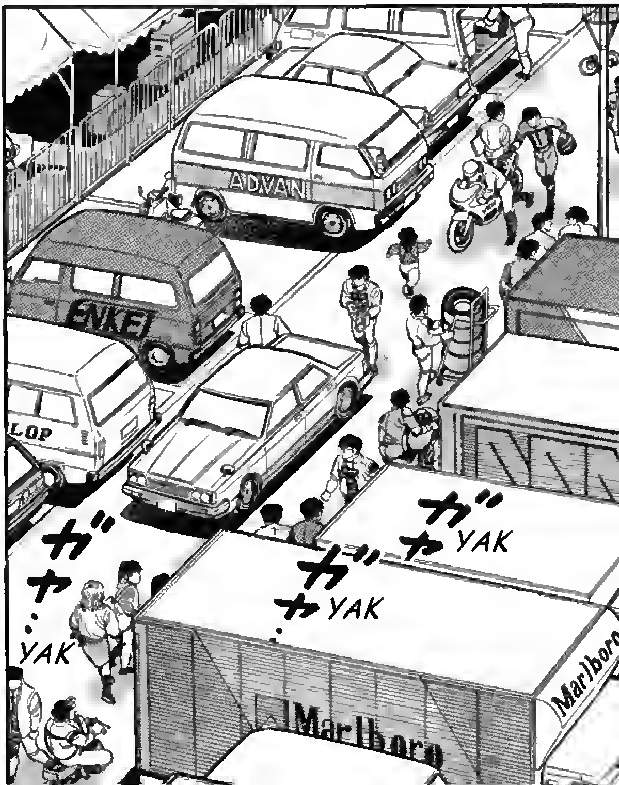
He's coming !
...
Why'd you put that thing in the car?
Since you never told me what you've got up your sleeve.

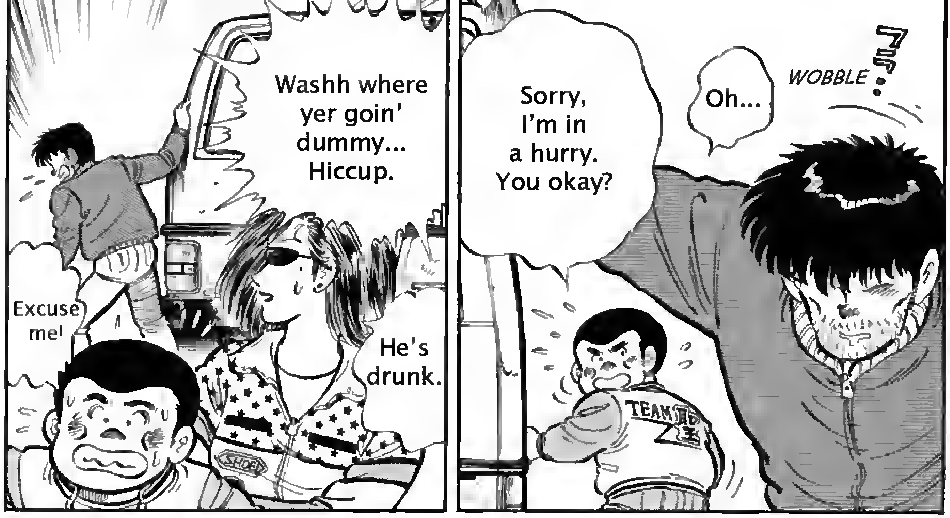

What's with them?


Huh ?
Please take notes and record his times!

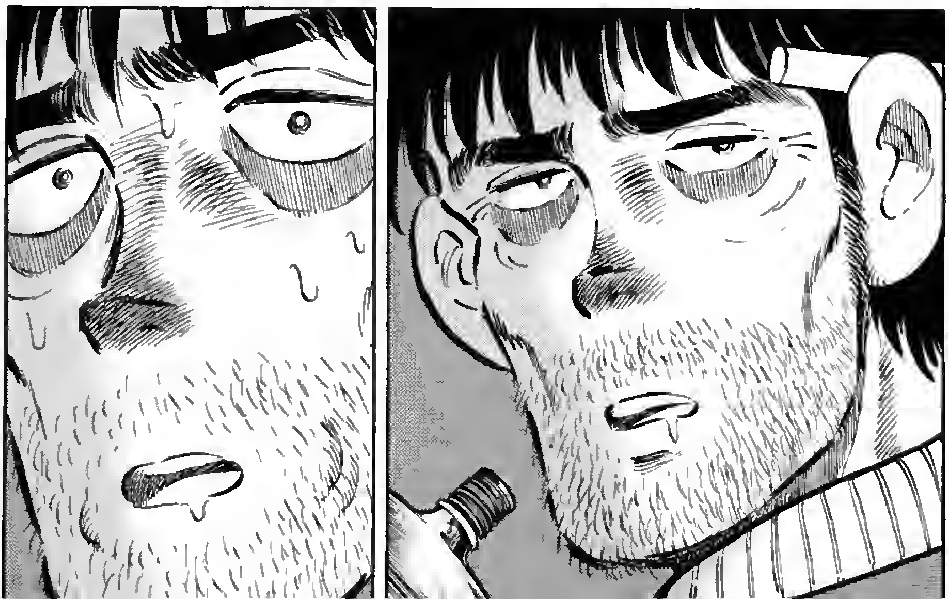

Over there!
WOBBLE

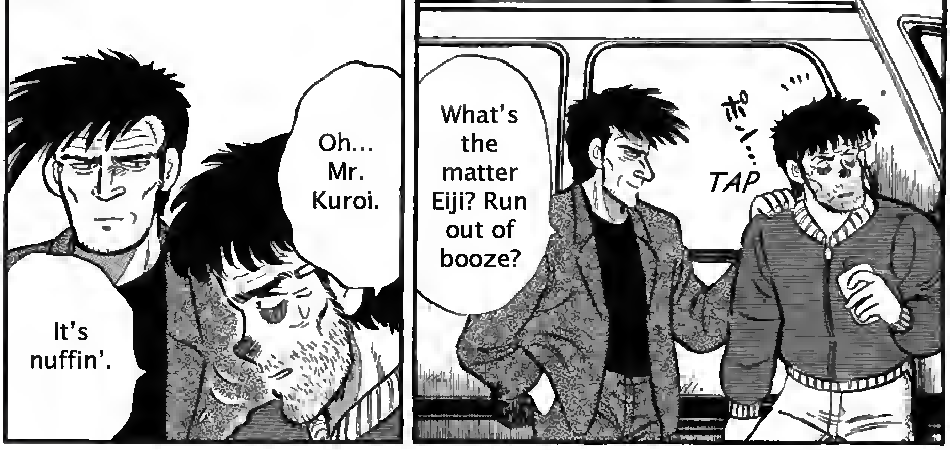

BAM


ADVAN
ENKEI
YAK
YAK
YAK
Marlboro
Marlboro


Washh where yer goin' dummy... Hiccup.
Excuse me!
He's drunk.
Sorry, I'm in a hurry. You okay?
Oh...
WOBBLE
フラ…

THUNK
ドス!!
Hmph!
SHIRK
スッ

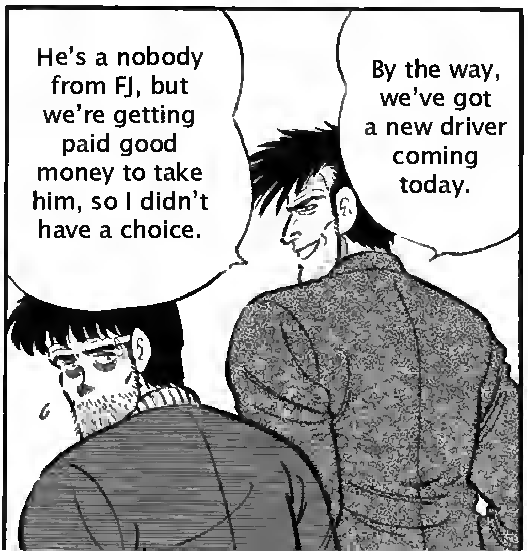


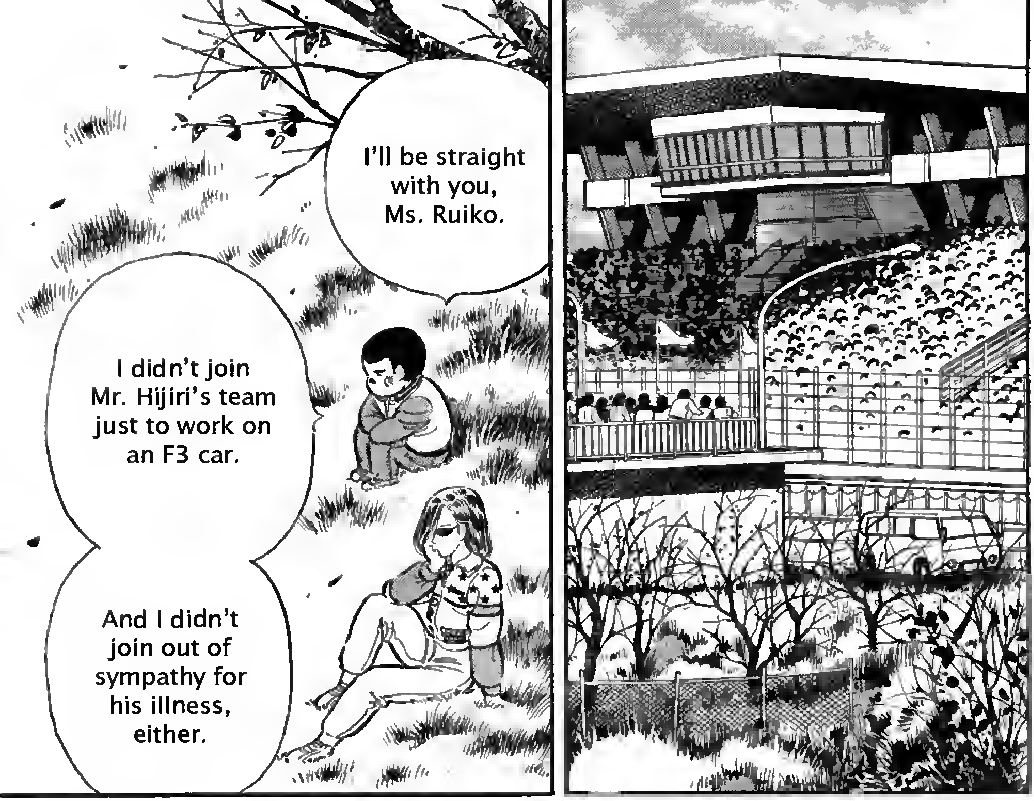

Oh... Mr. Kuroi.
It's nuffin'.
What's the matter Eiji? Run out of booze?
ポン...
TAP

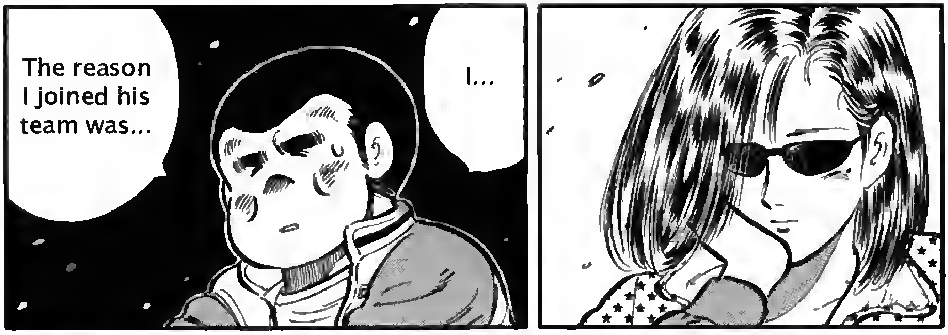
Don't say that. Goro's our best driver.
He oughta quit racing if he can't grow a pair.

He couldn't get a good time, so he came back to the pit after three laps, and he's complaining.
Hurry up and take a look at Goro's car!
Heh. Again?

Right.
Looks like we'll both have to babysit.


He's a nobody from FJ, but we're getting paid good money to take him, so I didn't have a choice.
By the way, we've got a new driver coming today.

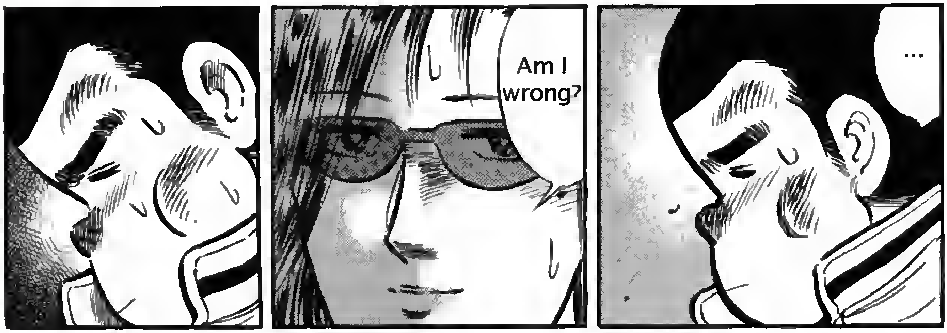

I'll be straight with you, Ms. Ruiko.
I didn't join Mr. Hijiri's team just to work on an F3 car.
And I didn't join out of sympathy for his illness, either.

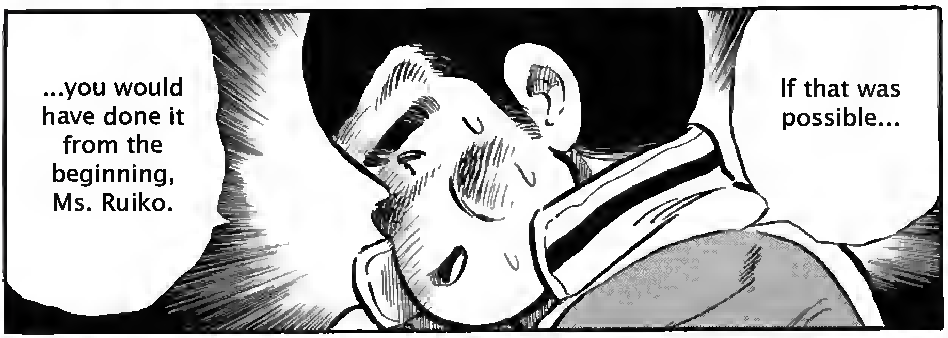

The reason I joined his team was...
I...

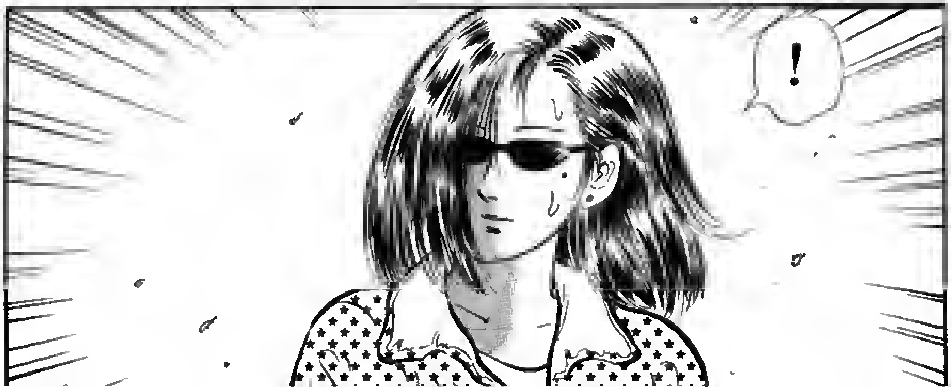
...an accident!
...to prevent...

But it's much too dangerous.
Sure, I can see why he'd wanna do that.
He wants to die on the race course.
If Mr. Hijiri has one of his seizures in the middle of a race...
...it could cause a terrible accident!
Why didn't you contact JAF?
There, I said it.
I gotta prevent that from happening, however possible!

That way you wouldn't have to betray your friends, and it seems like it would be the easiest way to prevent an accident.
If you inform JAF about Hijiri's illness, they'll revoke his license and he'll never be able to race again.

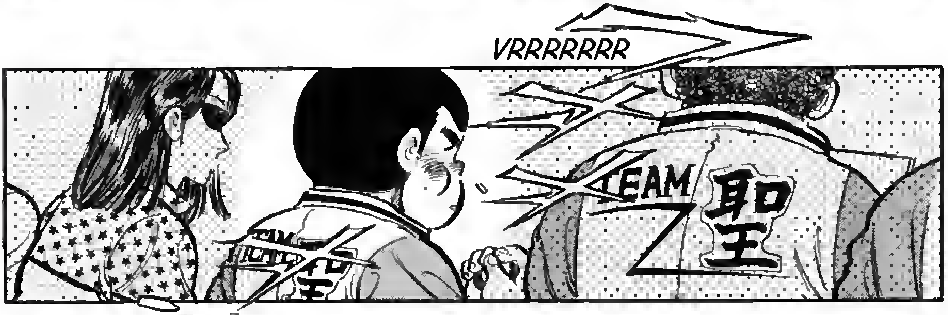

Am I wrong?
...

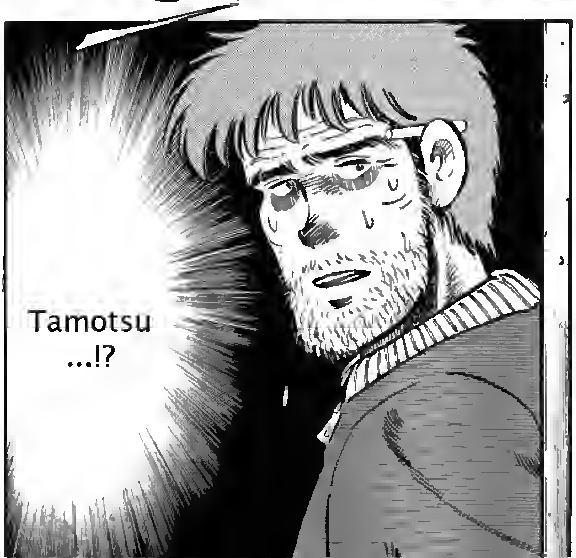

...you would have done it from the beginning, Ms. Ruiko.
If that was possible...

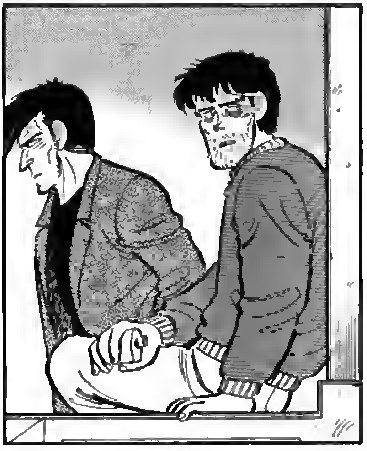

!

...I got an equal responsibility to make it stop!
If my responsibility as a mechanic is to get that car runnin' as fast as possible...
はHAはHA
TEAM
Anyway, when push comes to shove...
...I've gotta do what it takes to put Mr. Hijiri's car safely out of commission!
SHOEI
NGK
...
Tamotsu.
I knew I could count on you...

Guess I went too fast.
Ugh ...
Nothing to see here, idiots!
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
Oh crap!
Do you think you're racing alone!?
SHOOF







"F" Volume 5 THE END

F VOL.5

Author
ROKUDA NOBORU

Copyright
© ROKUDA NOBORU

First e-book edition-May 2015

Publisher
Creek & River Co., Ltd
C&R Group Bldg.,
2-10-9, Kojimachi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo Japan 102-0083

For more information, visit the site below.
"Japan Authors' Gallery KAORI"
http://www.cri.co.jp/KAORI/